

We call on strength
for one who lives day to day,
we call on strength
for one who suffers day to day,
we call on comfort
for one who fights illness,
we call on comfort,
for one who fights despair,
we call on courage
for the future,
we call on courage
for the loved ones,
we call on love
for one who learns
to hope beyond all hope
for wholeness.

(Lisa Withrow)

Lord of the universe
look in love upon your people.
Pour the healing oil of your compassion
on a world that is wounded and dying.
Send us out in search of the lost,
to comfort the afflicted,
to bind up the broken,
and to free those trapped
under the rubble of their fallen dreams.

(Sheila Cassidy)

I collated the contents of this booklet over a period of five years, when I was the Chaplain to the Marie Curie Hospice called 'Holme Towers' in Penarth. At the hospice I was challenged by a senior member of staff to discuss spirituality. Hence the brief explanation from which this ecumenical booklet took its shape.

The term spirituality is used to describe the very essence, which flows throughout our soul... our very being. Our spirituality, is the life force that drives us on, it's what controls our intuitions, our sense of moral values and beliefs. It's what makes us who and what we are each and everyone of us, as individuals, both special and unique. And just as the body needs to be cared for and nourished, then so to does the soul.

That is why, Spiritual care should not be treated as a luxury for the few but openly available to everyone; because just as one receives medical care and assistance whether they have faith or not; so too should we receive spiritual care because very often in many cases spiritual care could well be the only effective care that is available. This is why, I felt the need for such a booklet to offer words of encouragement, comfort & support to the patients and their families.

Hospice Ministry is Multi-Faith and collating the contents of the book has been challenging, yet rewarding. The booklet was thankfully well received by many people from all walks of life and since my return to parish ministry, I decided to continue to offer the booklet to people who might benefit from it. So I hope and pray that as you have received this booklet, you will find peace in your heart and mind as you look to the challenging times ahead on your journey through life.

With my love and prayers
Rev Kevin Lake

When I enquired of a dear friend at the hospice, her response to my query, 'How did you cope with the question, 'Why Me?''? She immediately, responded without any hesitation whatsoever, with her reply, 'Well, Why Not!?' She went onto say, 'Why should it always have to be someone else?' 'I am nothing special, I am only human, just like everyone else in this hospice! Her reply left me dumb-founded and yet through her humility, she had just taught me one of the most valuable lessons of my ministry!! The following is a tribute to Sue's faith, her great wisdom and immense courage in the face of personal adversity.

Why?

*Wisdom is not knowing all the answers
to the problems of each day.*

*It's not knowing why this happened to me
and not to someone else.*

*It's not soaking up all the knowledge
this world can offer, but knowing that
behind the whole of life, for now and evermore,*

*God is sovereign and,
though I may not understand,
He is working to make us each
according to His plan.*

*If we ask, there is an answer to each problem,
though it may not be the one we want to hear.*

Believe your God will take your hand if you allow.

*Let Him guide your every step,
and when you feel unsure*

*Believe with all your heart that
He knows best.*

*Put away from you all bitterness
and wrath and anger and wrangling
and slander, together with all malice,
and be kind to one another,
tender hearted, forgiving one another
as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

(Ephesians 4: v 31-32)

Lord Jesus,
You taught us to pray
for the forgiveness of the wrong
that we have done,
as we have forgiven
those who have wronged us.

Help us also to forgive ourselves
for moments we can never forget,
deeds we can never undo,
words we can never take back,
things we bitterly regret.

As we look back in sorrow,
help us also to look forward in joy,
knowing that past wrongs
can be righted and pain
and hurt healed.

Through the love of your Son
Our saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

(All Prayers were written by Neville Smith)

*When Jesus saw how thoughtfully
he answered, he said to him,
'You are not far from the Kingdom of God'.
(Mark 12: v 34)*

God our loving Father,
you are a refuge and stronghold
a timely help in trouble.

We pray for those
whose lives are beset
by illness.

We give thanks for those
who are confident and unafraid,
and believe in you.

And we pray to for those
who find it difficult to believe.

Grant to them all,
strength in their weakness,
and peace of mind in their hearts.
may you encourage them
to cast aside their doubts,
their fears and their anger.

So that they may
believe in themselves,
have respect and confidence
in those who care for them,
and rest secure in your
love for us.
Amen

Calm

In the calm
we move softly,
with precision
each footfall
finds its purpose,
every imprint
is worthwhile.

When we
communicate
our words
have clarity,
touch a cord,
speak to the heart.

In the calm
we live
each moment,
Experience
each breath of
energy and life.

We feel with depth,
a touch,
a glance,
a smile,
reaching the core.

In the calm
we find answers,
know which
questions
to ask and
with right intention
our deeds
are powerful.

- *Hindsight is a wonderful thing
it also means it's a bit late.*
- *Courage is the leaf,
that doesn't wait
for Autumn.*
- *Sleep is when the real you,
takes a break from
your personality.*
- *Don't waste ill health; use it to heal your life...*
- *Troubled waters can be crossed using a
bridge called friendship...*
- *Life's like a jigsaw puzzle. We can get so
wrapped up in trying to make the
little pieces fit, that we miss the whole picture.*
- *Pain and Pleasure;
are the thorns and petals of the same rose.*
- *True faith works as well on Monday in the
Bathroom, as it does on Sunday in Church.*
- *A fear starts when you think it, and stops when you
don't.*
- *In death I see much beauty although my view's
not widely shared, so for the only thing
that's guaranteed so few will be prepared.*
- *Trust is letting go...*

(all quotations by Richard Wilkins)

*'Tell us', they said, 'by what authority
you are acting like this...?'
Jesus answered them,
'I also have a question for you'.*

(Luke 20: v 2-3)

*Lord Jesus Christ,
during your life among us
you were asked many questions,
and yourself asked many in return.*

*Be present with all those
who ask questions in this hospice:
the staff, the patients
and their families.
Give gentleness to those
who seek information,
sensitivity and understanding
to those who give it,
and courage to those who receive it.*

*Grant them confidence
that in sharing such knowledge,
about themselves,
they are drawing closer to you,
the source of our knowledge
of the love of God,
and of his everlasting care for us all.*

Amen

*My Father, if it is possible,
Let this cup pass me by.*
(Matthew 26: v 39)

Heavenly father,
You are perfect in truth and love.
In Jesus, your Son,
you entered our
world where fear
and anxiety abound.
Be with all those who are
full of doubt
about themselves,
about their illness,
and
what the future holds.

Give them strength
this day and grant
them to know that
you accept them.
Love them, and hold them.
So that they may believe
in you, and in themselves,
that their doubts and fears
trouble them no more,
and they rest secure
in your love.
Amen

Bitterness is a self destructive force; It can only melt
when the heart thaws, when understanding illumines the
great harm it can cause. It has been called the cancer of the
soul.

*A war-time pilot who lost both legs whilst severely wound-
ed in combat refused to be overcome by self-pity.*

*His motto stayed in my thoughts and has helped so much
over the years: he said, "To be bitter is to admit defeat".*

(Anne Way)

Let your Peace

Lord, let your peace...

Seep into my soul
Flow into my soul
Flood into my soul...

Let your peace...

Fold me in its wings
'til my spirit sings

cast out all ill
Bid me still...

Let your peace...

Rule in my heart...
Reign in my soul...

My strong hold be.
(Anne Way)

I cherish each moment of my life.

- *Live every day to the full, always keep a positive attitude and try, however difficult it may seem, to be kind to your loved ones, because they hurt when you hurt.*

Wounded

Astride the rollers of our destiny,
We who have felt the scourge and
sting of pain, ride.

In sombre depths of melancholy sadness.
Or sudden heights of sunlit golden gladness.
As when, at night, we lie like moored ships,
tossing in mountainous waves of agony,
And waiting with ever growing restlessness
Smooth running waters of unbroken sleep.

Or when,

From the unfathomable deep that is
Unconsciousness, we rise once more
And see again the well remembered smile,
Feeling the touch of firm and friendly fingers.

Then,

In flowing sea of white capped sheets,
We lie awhile

Lapped by the waters of silence, gladly shared
By one who knew our pain and knowing...
Cared .

(Kenneth M.G. Kinghorn)

- *Dear God, may we look backward with gratitude, forward with courage, and upwards with confidence.*

*From the end of earth I call to you
with fainting heart; lift me up
and set me high on a rock.*

(Psalm 61: v2)

Lord God,
we remember the uncertainty
of the Disciples as
they followed Jesus,
not knowing
where he would lead them
or what the outcome
might be.

We commend to you all who face
the uncertainty
of the outcome of their illness,
of the illness of their loved ones,
of the love and support
they'll receive from
the Doctors and Nurses.

Be to them always a strong rock,
and a source of strength,
and in the midst
of uncertainty and change,
grant them the assurance
of your unchanging presence
in their lives.
Amen

*So do not be anxious about tomorrow;
tomorrow will look after itself.
Each day has troubles enough of its own.*
(Matthew 6: v34)

Heavenly Father,
we are familiar with
the words of Jesus,
yet we have to confess
that we find it difficult
to make them our own.

Look with mercy
upon all those who suffer anxiety
for those whom they love,
for themselves,
about the outcome of tomorrow.

Reassure them with the knowledge
that you are with them at all times,
and that day by day
they are held in your love.
for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen

Footprints

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed that he was walking along a beach with the Lord, and across the sky flashed scenes from his life.

For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; One belonged to him, the other to the Lord. When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of life, there was only one set of footprints.

And he also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of his life. This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it...

*"Lord you said that once I decided to follow you,
you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed
That during the most troublesome times in my life
there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand
why, when I needed you most, you would leave me".*

The Lord replied,

*"My precious child, I love you
and I would never leave you.
During the times of trial and suffering,
when you see only
one set of footprints,
it was then that I carried you".*

Loving Hands

I had a sorrow so deep that human love
Could not penetrate its deepest recesses.

I stumbled through the valley of
suffering in my mind, down, down into
the depths of the darkness.

And there in the tearless pain beyond
pain, I saw two hands outstretched.

Two pierced hands – that was all
I could see – two pierced hands held
out to me.

I knew that my sorrow was shared
to the uttermost,
That I did not stand alone in the darkness,
that every part of my pain was understood.

Two loving hands – that was all
I could see – two loving hands held
out to me.

I felt no lessening of pain.
The stark reality of sorrow was still
there, to be faced and lived with.

But I was not alone.
In healing silence two pierced hands
had held mine in the depths
of that darkness.

Two sharing hands – that was all
I had seen – two sharing hands
held out to me.

(Mary Hathaway)

*Moved with pity, He stretched out
His hand and touched him...* (Mark ch 1:v 41)

PRAYERS

*So they cried to the Lord in their trouble
And he rescued them from their distress.*

(Psalm 107:v6)

Heavenly Father,
in your compassion look
on all who call on you
in fear, anxiety,
and distress of mind.
Grant them to know
that you are with them.
Strengthen them within
so that with confidence
they may be able to withstand
all the stresses which beset them,
and grant them peace
which passes all understanding;

In the name of
Jesus Christ Our Lord
Amen.

*Take Time to Work,
it is the price of Success.
Take Time to Meditate,
it is the Source of Power.
Take Time to Play,
it is the Secret of Perpetual Youth.
Take Time to Read,
it is the Way to Knowledge.
Take Time to be Friendly,
it is the Road to Happiness.
Take Time to Laugh,
it is the Music of the Soul.
And Take Time to Love,
and be Loved.*

(adapted from an Old Irish Prayer)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not in to temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen

I Pray Today

I pray today
in all earnestness
with all my heart and soul
for those whose hands
have reared me
and held me close
for those who have caressed
and eased my pain
and borne the suffering with me;
for those whose hearts
have wept in grief
and yet
sung happy songs to me;
for those who show
the patience rare
and help me
to keep my cool;
for those who dwell
in my bruised heart
and keep me wrapped
with the warmth of their love.
How can any harm
come to me,
when I am protected
with an armour of love.

(Gitanjali)

*Take the breath of the new dawn
and make it part of you.
It will give you strength*

(Hopi)

When I Ask You to Listen And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people – because God is mute and doesn't give advice or try to fix things.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me – strange as that may seem.

God just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen.
Not talk or do - just hear me.

So please listen and just hear me.
And, if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to you.

(Adapted from a poem by Ralph Roughton, MD.)

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

- *The real art of listening, is listening to those who will not listen to you.*

But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and can get about the business, of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling.

- *A million tears have been shed for what people thought... But never said.*
- *People who reach out, will always touch more.*

Then the Master looked down and saw a vessel of clay.
Empty and broken it helplessly lay.
No hope had the vessel that the Master might choose,
To cleanse and make whole, to fill and to use.

'Ah!! This is the vessel I've been hoping to find,
I will mend and use it and make it all Mine.
I need not the vessel with pride of its self;
Nor the one who is narrow to sit on the shelf;
Nor the one who is bigmouthed and shallow and loud;
Nor one who displays his contents so proud;
Not the one who thinks he can do all things just right;
But this plain earthy vessel filled
with My power and might'.

Then gently He lifted the vessel of clay,
mended and cleansed it and filled it that day,
and spoke to it kindly...
'There's work you must do,
just pour out to others
as I pour into you'.

Be like the flowing river,
Silent in the night.
Be not afraid of the dark.
If there are stars in the sky, reflect them back.
If there are clouds in the sky,
Remember, clouds, like the river, are water,
So, gladly reflect them too,
In your own tranquil depths.

Manuel Bandeira

The Chosen Vessel

The Master was searching for a vessel to use;
On the shelf there were many -
which one would He choose?

'Take me', cried the gold one, 'I'm shiny and bright,
I'm of great value and I do things just right.
My beauty and lustre will outshine the rest
And for someone like You, Master,
gold would be the best!'

The Master passed on with no word at all;
He looked at a silver urn, narrow and tall;
'I'll serve You, dear Master, I'll pour out Your wine
And I'll be at Your table whenever You dine,
My lines are so graceful, my carvings so true,
And my silver will always compliment You'.

Unheeding the Master passed on to the brass,
It was wide-mouthed and shallow,
and polished like glass.
'Here! Here! cried the vessel, I know I will do,
Place me on Your table for all men to view'.

'Look at me', called the goblet of crystal so clear,
'My transparency shows my contents so dear,
Though fragile am I, I will serve You with pride,
And I'm sure I'll be happy in Your house to abide'.

The Master came next to a vessel of wood,
Polished and carved, it solidly stood.
'You may use me, dear Master', the wooden bowl said,
'But I'd rather You used me for fruit, not for bread!'

A Tibetan Prayer

Grant that I may be given
appropriate difficulties
and sufferings on this journey
so that my heart
be truly awakened and my
practice of liberation
and universal compassion may
truly be filled.

At the beginning...

*I was mistaken in four respects, I
sought to remember God, to know
him, to love Him, and to seek Him.*

*When I had come to the end, I saw
that He had remembered me before
I remembered Him.*

*That His knowledge of me had pre-
ceded my knowledge of Him.*

*His love existed before my love to
Him, and that He had sought me
before I sought Him.*

(Bayazid Bistami, Sufi Master)

Pain is real.

It makes no difference whether
the pain comes from the body,
the mind, the heart or the soul.
That pain is real.

Once...

*Mother Theresa was asked
how she could continue
day after day after day,
visiting the terminally ill,
feeding them,
touching them,
wiping their brows,
giving them comfort
as they lay dying.*

*And she said,
"It's not hard,
because in each one
I see the face of Christ
in one of His more
distressing disguises."*

"My heart embraces all who
know me, who come to me for
help. Thus shall it always be.
My brothers and sisters, my
help is yours to command: You
have only to ask."

"Take heart, my friends. All
shall be well. All manner of
things shall be well."

From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing that we do know: that man is here for the sake of other men – above all for those upon whose smile and well-being our happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected with a bond of sympathy.

Many times a day I realize how much my outer and inner life is built upon the labours of my fellow-men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.

(Albert Einstein)

- *Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.*
(Helen Keller)
- One way to express the Spiritual crisis of our time, is to say that most of us have an address but we cannot be found there.
(Henri Nouwen)
- *Tears soften the soul, clear the mind and open the heart.*
- Soul Making – What inspires compassion ?
It is the love we have and share with one another.
 - *Compassion is a meaningful word...
the same suffering,
the same agony,
accepting in my heart
the misery in yours,
O, my brother/sister
and you accepting me.*

The Gate

There's a time in life when you wait,
to stand beside some garden wall, though
shuttered by a gate.

Be patient in your longing, be guided by your dreams,
But analyse it not, life isn't what it seems.

You try the latch, you see the view,
The longing just to be there, colours all you do.
Be patient in your yearning, be guided from within,
First discover what you want – to be let out or in!

You've travelled far to reach this place-now pause,
And through achieving much expect no applause.
For journeys can be lonely – the goal must be your own –
are you coming from or going to the place
your heart calls home?

This garden wall you've followed
has been both friend and foe.
A wall to block your vision, but a shelter even so.
Now at last you've stumbled on a gate you knew was there,
Yet shock has hit your senses like a breath of mountain air.

There's a reason for your journey,
for your dreams and all you do.
Yet until now you couldn't see where it was leading too.
Stand by life's gate and rest awhile,
a pause and let it be,
Then when you're not expecting it –
someone will turn the key!

Lynn New

A POEM OF HOPE

One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.
One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.
One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room,
One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.
One step must start each journey,
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.
One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true.
One life can make the difference.
You see, it's up to YOU!

Composed by a young girl in Belarus, Russia, near the site of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster Area.

“...he who has been deeply hurt,
has a RIGHT to be sure
he is LOVED”.

Recovering

*Kindness, concern,
words, said with care
are stitching together
what is aching and sore
and living sources awaken
sharing in the renewed
strength of faith
kindling hope
waiting for love
to enter.*

(Margrit Dahn)

Death is a part of all our lives.
Whether we like it or not,
it is bound to happen. Instead
of avoiding thinking about it,
it is better to understand its meaning.

We all have the same body,
the same human flesh,
and therefore we will all die.

There is a big difference, of course,
between natural death and accidental death,
but basically death will come sooner or later.

If from the beginning your attitude is,
'Yes, death is part of our lives',
then it may be easier to face.

(His Holiness the Dalai Lama)

Let it Be

When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.
And in my hour of darkness
She is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

And when the broken hearted people
Living in the world agree,
There will be an answer, let it be.
For though they may be parted there is
Still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, let it be.
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be. Yeah
There will be an answer, let it be.

And when the night is cloudy,
There is still a light that shines on me,
Shine on until tomorrow, let it be.
I wake up to the sound of music
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be,
There will be an answer, let it be.
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

The Beatles (Lennon/McCartney)

Moving on

*I try to live one day at a time.
It has given me a focus as to what is important in life.
It has opened new doors to me and
introduced me to new people.
It has shown me the importance of true friendships.
It has strengthened my faith I God.*
(Elvira Lowe)

“This too will pass”... I was taught these words by my grandmother as a phrase that is to be used at all times in your life. When things are spectacularly dreadful; when things are absolutely appalling; when everything is superb and wonderful and marvellous and happy - say these four words to yourself. They will give you a sense of perspective.
(Claire Rayner)

*The solution is with you.
It is clear and bright as a flame - but hidden from you by
the swirling dark of misery.
Remember all the sweetness that has been given you - and that still
waits beyond the tumult.
It will take your courage to withstand the
onslaught of despair.
But hold to quietness and hope.
Look to the centre of your being, the place of peace.*
(Pam Brown)

- In quietness and trust is your strength.
(Isaiah ch30:v15)

Looking Ahead

*Look up with wonder.
Look back with gratitude.
Look around with love.
Look within with honesty.
Look ahead with anticipation.*

(Jim Graham)

Facing Your Fears and Anxieties

When you are walking along this difficult pathway of living with an incurable cancer or some other disease, there is no doubt that both you and your family will feel overwhelmed with fear and anxiety by the knowledge of your condition.

However, what seems to overcomplicate matters, is the fact that the whole of society seems to work on the basis of investment for the future, whether it is buying insurance, or saving for next year's holiday or even for one's retirement. You may suddenly feel that you have been excluded from 'normal life' so to speak. Yet in spite of this feeling, the reality is that everyone of us has to live one day at a time. The quality of today's experience is not really affected by how many tomorrows there may be.

There is a lovely story of an elderly lady who went to her bank and was asked by a young cashier if she would like to take out life insurance. She replied, "My dear, at my age I debate about buying a bunch of green bananas".

What a wonderful attitude both sensible and humorous, it stresses the importance of taking each day as it comes. Cancer touches every part of our lives – not only the physical but also the emotional and the spiritual. It is obviously not an experience people would choose, and surely those of us who are affected by cancer could wish to have learned from the lessons of life in some other gentler way, but through our experience we begin to appreciate the gift of life so much more, we no longer take it for granted.

- *Live every day to the full, always keep a positive attitude and try, however difficult it may seem, to be kind to your loved ones, because they hurt when you hurt.*

*In extreme circumstances we see truth laid out before us.
Just when we had begun to accept cynicism as the norm,
our humanity runs to our rescue, showing how plainly
we all depend on each other to survive in this world.*

Showing us the grace and beauty in unselfishness.

Showing us the real heroes in life are not the celebrities grabbing the headlines, but those unseen all around us, the humble man or woman in the street.

Stranger helping stranger united by the most powerful force on Earth. And that each and every one of us are blessed with and sometimes forget, namely, the innate desire to Love and be Loved.

*And simply by following higher instincts
we can all make that difference.*

It's comforting to know how wonderful you are.

(Gordon Haskell)

LESSONS IN LIFE

*It is only when we have descended
to the depths of sorrow
that we can understand
the complexity of being human,
feel for all other suffering
living creatures, honour courage -
and give understanding,
kindness, and companionship
to those who need it.*

(Pam Brown)

LOVE

Love is something you
and I must have.
We must have it because
our spirit feeds upon it.
We must have it because
without it we
become weak and faint.
Without it our courage fails.
Without love we can no longer
look confidently at the world.
We turn inward and begin
to feed upon our own
personalities and
little by little
we destroy ourselves.
With it we march tirelessly.
With it, and
With it alone,
We are able to
sacrifice for others.

(Chief Dan George)

The Gift

*Yesterday is History
Tomorrow is a Mystery
Today is a Gift
That's why they call it...*
THE PRESENT

*I built my house by the sea.
Not on the sands, mind you,
not on the shifting sand.
And I built it of rock.
A strong house
by a strong sea.
And we all got well acquainted, the sea and I.
Good neighbours.
Not that we spoke much.
We met in silences,
respectful, keeping our distance
but looking our thoughts across the fence of sand.
Always the fence of sand our barrier,
always the sand between .
And then one day
(and I still don't know what happened)
The sea came.
Without warning.
Without welcome even.
Not sudden and swift, but a shifting across the sand like wine.
Less like the flow of water than the flow of blood.
Slow, but flowing like an open wound.
And I thought of flight, and I thought of drowning,
and I thought of death.
But while I thought the sea crept higher till it reached my door.
And I knew that there was neither flight nor death nor drowning.
That when the sea comes calling you stop being good neighbours,
well acquainted, friendly from a distance neighbours.
And you give your house for a coral castle
and you learn to breathe under water.*

(Carol Bialock)

The Greatest Courage

There is the courage that springs from battle fever, or from a desperate emergency. And there is a courage that is rooted in the acceptance of a dreadful circumstance, and all that it entails – a courage that brings sanity and cheerfulness and hope to lives that could be utterly consumed by sorrow.

This is the courage that endures. This is the greatest victory.

(Pam Brown)

It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness

(Eleanor Roosevelt)

Small sadnesses, great tragedies, link us all in love.

(Pam Brown)

Once you have been confronted by a life and death situation, trivia no longer matters. Your perspective grows and you live at a deeper level.

(Margarette 'Happy' Rockefeller)

You are not Alone

Think of one thing. You are not alone. A million lives have known this pain – and found at last a way to new tranquillity.

(Pam Brown)

My body is my reflection... When you die you leave your reflection. Your real self leaves your body and goes into another world...where it will be the happiest life of all...

God has the answers, we have the questions, and only in the end will he tell us the answers. God has kept that new life a secret and I am glad because it will give us a surprise, it will give us such a big surprise.

(Gavarn Byrne, aged 11, a year before he died)

*Pain is like a sculptor's chisel;
It chips away at the shapeless block of stone
to reveal the masterpiece
which is hidden within.*

You can grow big and strong
without eating any meat.

Ask any Tree!!

IN LIFE: Many people are
struggling with the stairs
to notice that there is a lift.

Pain has created more Love Songs
than Happiness.

*Life is like a flower;
You have to push your way
through the top soil and often
some manure before
you get to blossom.*

Your body is the car that takes you through life.
One day the car will be scrapped...
But that isn't the end of the driver,
...IS IT?

Like The Dew That Goes Early Away.

There is a prayer that we often use in the funeral service that bids God, "...as we feel the pain of others, so may we share with them the comfort we receive from you". This prayer was something that came to my mind whilst leading a parish retreat at the Llangasty Retreat Centre near Brecon. It came to my mind because something quite unexpected and very powerful happened to me during one of my morning addresses.

I was talking about our call to serve God and each other and about the sacrifice and endurance that is required in serving our long-term sick loved ones in particular, when, as I looked around the chapel, the pains and problems of all those sitting in a semicircle in front of the altar, came into my mind quite out of the blue. There was perhaps nothing strange about that in itself; after all, it is the privilege of the priest to have people share their fears and sorrows with him and after serving three years in this particular parish, it was almost inevitable that I would know something personal that was on the heart of everyone present there that morning.

What *was* remarkable was that I felt that as I was speaking, I began to physically feel the emotional /spiritual pain that was still dwelling within those gathered with me. As this was happening, I heard myself changing some of what I had prepared to say, to address what was hurting my Christian family in that place – words I am sure that were given to me there and then to be applied as a spiritual balm. I could hear weeping in several different parts of the chapel and I hoped that it would be obvious to no one that I was finding these "new words" as moving as they clearly were – words for which I take no credit.

After the morning service had ended, instead of going to my room to remove my cassock, as I usually did, I quickly left the building to find a quiet spot in the grounds to think and pray over what had happened in the chapel. I asked God for assurance that in saying what I had said – in obedience, I hope, to Him – that I had not added to anyone's pain.

Believe in Yourself, and Remember That Anything is Possible.

*Believe in what makes you feel good
and what makes you happy.
Believe in the dreams you've
always wanted to come true
and give them every chance to.*

*No one knows the ultimate meaning of life,
but for those who believe in their dreams
and in themselves,
life is a precious gift in which
anything is possible.*

(Dena Dilaconi)

God's Address

"Where is the dwelling of God?"

This is the question with which
the Rabbi of Kotsk surprised
a number of learned men
who happened to be visiting him.

They laughed at him:

"What a thing
to ask! Is not the whole
world full of His glory?"

Then he answered his
own question;

"God dwells wherever man lets Him in."

(Martin Buber)

Time for Giving

Do something today to bring gladness
to someone whose pleasures are few.
Do something today to drive away sadness
or cause someone's dream to come true.
Find time for a neighbour's greeting
and time to enjoy an old friend.
Remember that years are so fleeting,
that life's final day soon will end.

Do something today that tomorrow
will prove to be really worth while.
Help someone to overcome sorrow
and greet the new day with a smile.
For only through kindness and giving
or service and friendship and cheer.
Can we learn the true glory of living
and find so much happiness here.

(Dylan Thomas)

- *You probably know that life isn't a dress rehearsal. But did you know that it has a limited run and can be closed without a two week notice?*
- Life is too short, to not do what you want to do!
- *Life is too short to live without love or laughter. It's too short to be insecure, or unhappy, or judgemental, or scared. And it's far, far too short to go without **ice-cream** and **chocolate**!!*

(Taken from Lolly's 20 Top Cancer Tips)

Then, wanting to be alone for a while, I went for a walk to nearby S. Gastyn's Church. As I walked, I became aware of my cassock becoming heavier as the hem began to absorb the dew that was still lying, glistening on the grass through which I strolled. It was then that God spoke again.

As I had momentarily borne the weight of others' pain so now I was temporarily carrying the weight of the morning dew. The dew, like pain, is something which appears unbidden, in silence and invisibly. It lies where it wills and weighs down each delicate blade of grass on which it falls causing it to bow down under the burden.

But, my brothers and sisters, under the warmth of God's great light, the dew, again in silence, again unseen with no interference from us, is gently lifted from the earth allowing each blade of grass to spring up straight pointing to the source of life.

I know that when the dew of pain is upon you, it likewise causes you to bend under the weight – but God will not let a blade of grass break under the pressure of the dew and neither will He allow fear and pain to snap you.

Be assured, please, that whatever happens to you in this life, God is shining on you like the morning sun; He warms the chill from you and lights the dark way before you. He loves you more than anything else in creation and however long it takes, silently, invisibly, with no strength of your own, He will lift the dew of pain from you – of this I am convinced beyond all doubt.

Love and prayers,
Fr. David Lloyd

When we face our sins, our guilt, our doubts and fears. God's all forgiving grace not only changes our thoughts and actions; it will also change our hearts. Our lives will reflect the forgiving love of God at work within us.

Wounded Healers

I met him on the train, and before long, I felt I knew him, I felt that I could trust him. He was in education; 'Learning for Life' he called it. I said that I was interested in education for life too, so he invited me to come with him to where he taught and learned.

It was off the main road, near to the Fire Station, it didn't look like a school...You walked through the door of a second hand shop and going through to the back, you came to a big room, with a lot of people in it. We stood and looked around. *(pause for thought)*

In the corner was an old man with a white stick, beside him sat a girl reading him the newspaper. 'Nice to see young folk helping the blind,' I said. 'Oh,' he replied, he's actually teaching her how to see. Across the floor in the direction of the toilets, came a wheel chair. A boy of 18, suffering from palsy sat in it and a boy of the same age pushed it. 'It's great when friends help each other,' I said. 'Yes' he replied, 'the boy in the chair is teaching the other how to walk.'

An old woman lay in a bed at the bottom of the room. She was very ill and covered with open sores. A woman much her junior was bathing her and dressing her wounds. 'Is she a nurse,' I asked. 'Yes', he replied, 'the old woman is a nurse and she is teaching the other how to care'.

Seated round a table, I saw group of young couples and a doctor was talking to them about childbirth. He spoke slowly and used sign language with his hands. I think it is only fair that deaf people should know about these things,' I said. 'But they do know about things,' my new friend replied, 'they are teaching the doctor how to listen'.

And then I saw a woman on a respirator, breathing slowly. These were her last breaths. And around her were her family and friends soothing her brow, holding her hands. 'It's not good to die alone' I said. 'That's right' came the reply, 'but she is not dying alone, she is teaching the others how to live.'

You have to accept whatever comes and the only important thing is that you meet it with courage and the best you have to give.

(Eleanor Roosevelt)

Courage takes many forms. There is physical courage, there is moral courage. Then there is a still higher type of courage – the courage to brave pain, to live with it, to never let others know of it and to still find joy in life; to wake up in the morning with an enthusiasm for the day ahead.

(Howard Cosell)

When the worst things happen I will remember that I can and will handle them. I have been astounded by the great strength in myself and in the suffering people I've known. I see now that there is unfathomable strength and future joy for me, whatever awful problems come to me. And, yes that same strength is yours too.

(Helen Exley)

If the future seems overwhelming, remember that it comes one moment at a time.

(Beth Mende Conny)

Doubt is not an enemy to be overcome. It is a friend with whom we need to live, a friend who gives to our faith the enrichment necessary for its growth, but who asserts his own rights in the house and can be a nuisance or even an agony...
In short, doubt is faith in evolution.

(H A Williams)

A failure that we learn from, is not a failure at all!!

(Fr Brian D'arcy)

- *Most of the sorrows of the earth, humans cause themselves.*
- The heart is like a garden. It can grow compassion or fear, resentment or love...What seeds will you plant there?
- *Spiritual life should include a great measure of common sense.*
- Life is as fleeting as a rainbow, a flash of lightening , a star at dawn. Knowing this, how can you quarrel.
- *When wishes are few, the heart is happy. When desire ends, there is peace.*
- Take time every day to sit quietly and listen.
- *In life we cannot avoid change, we cannot avoid loss. Freedom and happiness are found in flexibility and ease which we move through.*
- There is the path of fear and the path of love. Which one will we follow?
- *Every life has a measure of sorrow. Sometimes it is this that awakens us.*
- Even our anger can be held with a heart of kindness.
- *Do not judge yourself harshly. Without mercy for ourselves we cannot love the world.*
- In times of difficulty take refuge in compassion and truth.
- *At the bottom of things most people want to be understood and appreciated.*

(The teachings of Buddha adapted for Contemporary Living by Jack Kornfield)

Confused and not knowing what to say. I suggested we sat down. After a while I felt that I could speak.

'Seeing all this', I said, 'I want to pray, I want to thank God that I have all my faculties. I now realise how much I can do to help others'.

And before I could say anymore, my friend looked me straight in the face and said, 'I don't want to upset your devotional life, but I hope that you will also pray to know your own needs, and not to be afraid to be touched by the needy. (Trevor Nash)

If we choose to live our lives with negative thoughts in our hearts and minds, we will be filled with anxiety, fear and stress. These feelings will inevitably lead to suffering for both ourselves and those around us. If however, we are able to use positive thoughts in our hearts and minds and if we can be true to ourselves in all that we say and do, then these feelings, will lead us to being open and honest, which will bring contentment, hope and peace of mind to ourselves and those around us.

(adapted by Revd Kevin Lake)

Tapping into real life issues still has an edge over the computer keyboard. (Indarjit Singh)

Wherever barriers are found, they need to be replaced by bridges. Bridges are for walking across, for meeting and listening to one another. Hearing leads to compassion and understanding; and understanding leads to respect.

(Rt Revd Roy Williamson)

The answer's to life's questions lies inside **YOU!** All you need do is to look, to listen and trust your inner voice.

(Fr Brian D'arcy)

LAUGHTER: The Best Medicine

Holme Tower is a priceless place
Built right overlooking the sea
Where the sun paints light on the water
As birds flit from tree to tree

The care is always excellent
The nurses are friendly too
And even the unpleasant tasks
They willingly do for you

You start with porridge or cornflakes
Tea, coffee and toasted bread
And if you just can't face getting up
You can eat it all in bed

There's a shower and bath, with jacuzzi
Blowing bubbles which tickle your toes
If you opt for a lick and a promise
A nurse helps - but she holds her nose

It isn't only for physical needs
That there is good care on hand
If you need a weep and a shoulder
There's someone who'll understand

But the big bonus is their quick laughter
Those beaming smiles when I arrive
For when laughing I can forget dying
And enjoy still being alive

Pat Wright
30.08.2002

Pause for Thought

'It was the Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, who reminded us that God is not the least impressed by national or religious identity. It's how we respect and behave to our neighbour that really counts.'

(Indarjit Singh)

'Life is a journey, travel it well', so said an old advertising campaign, for what I just cannot remember. A lot of people regard life as a journey. But I read this the other day; "We're not human beings on a spiritual journey. We're spiritual beings on a human journey". I think that the subtle difference between those two points of view actually gets to the meaning of life.

(Capt. Charles King)

The potential for human good is amazing. It makes the impossible happen, turns suffering into healing and despair to hope.

(Fr Brian D'arcy)

Faith is an invitation to a life of exploration and the occasional identity-crisis.

(Revd John Rackley)

A surgeon once had an argument with his gardener about religion. "I've cut into hundreds of bodies, said the doctor, and I've never seen a human soul."

"Well, said the gardener, the same can be said if you had cut into a tulip bulb, you wouldn't have seen a flower!"

(Capt Charles King)