

Grace Notes for Friday, March 5, 2021

Dear Friends,

It is Sunday and this missive is being written late as I grapple with some computer issues. Mea culpa!

Today certainly has lived up to its name as a day of the Sun and, as that was what woke me this morning, I found my thoughts drifting to this beautiful piece, which I may have shared before, based on the prayer known as St Patrick's Breastplate.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lBoTx4-7lk> One thing I found particularly entrancing was that, having clicked back onto another site with the music playing, YouTube just kept taking me on to more versions of it. It played in the background whilst I read the psalms, canticles and prayers of Morning Prayer and, by the time I left for Mass, my theme was "How can I keep from singing?"

From previous writings, you will know that I take great pleasure in the psalms – perhaps that is why I am so drawn to the Liturgy of the Hours – and especially in singing them or hearing them sung; after all, we know, from entries in the Book of Psalms which we are not sure how to interpret any more, that the psalms were written to be sung. To then go to the words of Lauds for this Sunday morning and have a series of psalms of blessing and the Cantic from Daniel 3 was a reminder that even if it is in Lent, Sunday is a day of praise and celebration. *Springs of water, bless the Lord: give glory and eternal praise to him.*

Bless the Lord, all his works, praise and exalt him for ever. Bless the Lord, you heavens; all his angels, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, you waters above the heavens; all his powers, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, sun and moon; all stars of the sky, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, rain and dew; all you winds, bless the Lord. Bless the Lord, fire and heat; cold and warmth, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, dew and frost; ice and cold, bless the Lord. Bless the Lord, ice and snow; day and night, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, light and darkness; lightning and storm-clouds, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, all the earth, praise and exalt him for ever.
Bless the Lord, mountains and hills; all growing things, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, seas and rivers; springs and fountains, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, whales and fish; birds of the air, bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord, wild beasts and tame; sons of men, bless the Lord. Bless the Lord, O Israel, praise and exalt him for ever.
Bless the Lord, his priests; all his servants, bless the Lord. Bless the Lord, spirits and souls of the just; all who are holy and humble, bless the Lord. Ananias, Azarias, Mishael, bless the Lord, praise and exalt him for ever.
Let us bless Father, Son and Holy Spirit, praise and exalt them for ever. Bless the Lord in the firmament of heaven, praise and glorify him for ever. *Springs of water, bless the Lord: give glory and eternal praise to him.*



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Not much doubt about the feelings being expressed here! I find myself wondering about the person who put together these words, trying not to overlook anything for which to bless God! It does make sense for us to express our gratitude, and being able to show it to God may make us more open to expressing gratitude to others around us also. Mental health practitioners tell us that an “attitude of gratitude” is very good for our mental health, leading to a more optimistic outlook on life, lower rates of stress and depression, and greater feelings of being loved and connected. There are even suggestions that it can have beneficial effects on our physical well-being by boosting our desire to eat well and exercise, leading to higher energy, better sleep and a stronger immune system. Isolated as we may be, we can still find ways to express our gratitude through many of the social media or even through an old-fashioned telephone call or hand-written note. Thank-you notes – which were so much a part of my childhood – are so unusual these days that I carried a handwritten note I received earlier this year around in my purse for quite a while before slipping into a folder of special keepsakes.



As we think of saying thank you, Lent may be a good time to refresh our praying of Grace before meals – after all, it is saying thank you for the food we eat. Although we do have set prayers which we can offer for this purpose, there is no harm in extemporising occasionally to be thankful: for a particular meal, the person who prepared it, and all of the workers from farmers, harvesters, packers and factory workers, truckdrivers, supermarket stockers and cashiers, many of them working for low or minimal wages to bring food to our tables. As we sit down to a meal, it may also be a good time to remember those less fortunate and to put our Lenten alms aside to provide for the needs of the poor.

I'm putting a plug in here too for the HCCF 24-hour fast on March 30-31st: you can find out more on the Board web page or at https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/HALTON_CATHOLIC_CHILDRENS_EDUCATION_FOUNDATION/

One of my favourite graces has always been the Selkirk Grace (oft wrongly attributed to Robert Burns but always proclaimed at Burns suppers!): “Some hae meat an canna eat, And some wad eat that want it; But we hae meat, and we can eat, And sae the Lord be thankit.” Which essentially means: some have food but can't eat; others would like to eat but have nothing. We have food and we can eat so let's thank God.

May yours be a very blessed and thankful Lent! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poiXz3rO6HI>
Gillian