

**Prayers, Litanies and Words of Wisdom on Growing Older**  
(Committee on Aging, the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, 1999)

**I. ON GROWING OLDER**

**For a Sense of Joy**

Grant us, O Lord, the royalty of inward happiness and the serenity which comes from living close to thee. Daily renew in us the sense of joy and let the eternal spirit of the Father dwell in our souls and bodies, filling us with light and grace so that, bearing about with us the infection of a good courage, we may be diffusers of life and may meet all ills and cross accidents with gallant and high-hearted happiness, giving thee thanks always for all things. AMEN

**As We and Those We Love Grow Older**

O God of unconditional and eternal love, you who give and sustain life in all its seasons, help us as we grow older to understand and affirm ourselves in our changing relationships with parents and others dear to us. Increase our sensitivity to their anxieties and frustrations. Give us thankful hearts for their love and nurture through the years. Grant us grace to forgive hurtful memories; and forgive us, Lord for our unloving words and deeds. Calm our fears of loss and change, and open our hearts to the promise of new life in Jesus' Name. AMEN

*--Barbara Brown*

**Looking at Life**

Heavenly Father, in our journey through life  
teach us to look back with gratitude  
and count our blessings;  
to look around with compassion  
and serve those in need;  
to look forward with confidence  
and trust you for all that's to come;  
in the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Lord, I believe that, if we abide in your love, "the best is yet to be," no matter what our age. As I begin this new day, give me the grace and wisdom to live every moment in the knowledge that you are leading me step by step into that joy that you have prepared for all who unfeignedly love you. This I ask in his name, my Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

*--Carroll E. Simcox*

O God, our times are in your hands. Look with favor, we pray, on all your servants as our days increase. Grant that we may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen our trust in your goodness all the days of our lives; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN. *--Prayer Book, adapted*

O God, our Creator and Sustainer, Look upon us as we grow older. Help us to remember with joy the tasks well done, the satisfactions gained. Let us look with eagerness to the days ahead and help us to succeed in all the works you have prepared for us to walk in. Fill our lives with the joy of service and use us Lord, as you will, now and forever. AMEN

### **Light at Evening Time**

We commit to Thy care, O Lord, those who are old and full of years, and can no longer bear the burden and heat of the day. Grant them to have so trusted in Thee in years which are gone, that in the loss of their daily works and the world they have long known, they shall not have lost Thee. Vouchsafe to them light at evening time, and the assurance that by serene example, they may also serve who only stand and wait; through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

### **Prayers for the Aging**

Remember, O Lord, we pray, the men and women who reach the summit of their years. Teach them to lay aside former responsibilities without regret, and to enjoy new leisure with delight. Keep their minds open and make their hearts young. Sustain them in health, surround them with love, and crown their days with such a living sense of your presence that they may be prepared to see you face to face in your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

### **A Thanksgiving for Length of Days**

Creator God, we thank you for the great give of length of days. As Sarah rejoiced with Abraham in the fulfillment of your promise of new life in their old age, we rejoice that the Holy Spirit enables us to continue learning and teaching, sharing with others our own growing understanding of your love.

We thank you that we are able, through your loving-kindness, to know the full circle of this life, from the miracle of birth through the grace of maturity and the mystery of death, to new and unending life in you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

*--The Rev. Marjorie Farmer*

May we ever wait until thee, O Lord, that we may ever renew our strength, mount up with wings like eagles, run and not be weary, and through each new day walk and not faint. AMEN.

## **In the Morning**

This is another day, O Lord. I know now what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Jesus. AMEN.

*--Theodore Parker Ferris*

## **The Gift of Life**

Teach me, O Lord, not to hold on to life too tightly. Teach me to hold it lightly; not carelessly, but lightly, easily. Teach me to take it as a gift, to enjoy and cherish while I have it, and to let it go gracefully and thankfully when the time comes. The gift is great, but the Giver is greater still. Thou, O God, are the Giver and in Thee is the Life that never dies. AMEN.

*--Theodore Parker Ferris*

Our heavenly Father,

we thank You that You have called us to be on a pilgrimage leading to final union with You;

we thank You that this journey is filled with joy, excitement, opportunity, challenge and recreation as well as testing, difficulty, sorrow, sin and suffering; we thank You that there is the opportunity as we move through the various phases and stages of this journey for more experiences of love and growth through You and through each other.

We pray,

that You will give us the strength and the courage to meet whatever we encounter on the road with a sense of adventure and trust in You and Your presence with us;

that You will give us the grace to see each meeting with another human being as an experience in which You are present, and each event, happening and crisis an opportunity to respond and grow in love for You and for our fellow human beings;

Finally, we pray that You will help us to fear nothing but the loss of You,

Through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,  
our Friend and companion on the way. AMEN.

## **A Prayer for Advancing Age**

Heavenly father, whose gift is the length of days; help us to make noble use of mind and body in our advancing years. As thou hast pardoned our transgressions, sift the in-gatherings of our memory that evil may grow dim and good may shine forth. We bless thee for thy gifts, and especially for thy presence and the love of friends in heaven and earth. Grant us new ties of friendship, new opportunities of service, joy in the growth and happiness of children, sympathy with those who bear the world's burdens, clear thought and quiet faith. Teach us to bear infirmities with cheerful patience. Keep us from narrow pride in outgrown ways, blind eyes that will not see the good of change, impatient judgments of the methods and experiments of others. Let thy peace rule our spirits through all the trial of our waning powers. Take from us all fear of death, and all despair or undue love of life, that with glad hearts at rest in thee we may await thy will concerning us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

*--This prayer, reprinted by request, first appeared in Day by Day in 1959. It was written by Miss Lena Sorabji, a daughter of the first Parsee in India to Christianity.*

## **II. AT RETIREMENT**

### **At Retirement**

Almighty God, Heavenly Father, look with favor, I pray, upon your servant as I retire from my former work. May I remember with joy tasks well done. Show me what I yet may do. Grant me new ties of friendship. Give me constant compassion for all who suffer. Keep me from narrow pride in outgrown ways, from eyes blinded to the good in change, from impatient judgments of the ways of others; and use us all, as you will, to your glory and the welfare of your people. AMEN.

*--Almus M. Thorpe, Sr., adapted*

O God of grace, may we rejoice in your work of leisure as we retire from the discipline of our work. Call us to use the talents you have given us for new paths of service. Remove from us all anxiety about the future and all impatience with the infirmities of advancing years. And help us grow ever closer to you and to all whom we love. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

*--Betty Jane Donley*

O God, who numbers all our days,  
Help us to find new paths  
For a new time  
New friends in new places,  
New thankfulness of heart  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

*--Robert N. Rodenmayer*

### **III. ON MOVING TO A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY**

“Put it firmly in your mind before you move that you will accept life and people as you find them—the stupid, the bright, the boring and garrulous (those who talk non-stop and interrupt your bright comment that you never get to make). Keep in mind that these strange folk are all loved by God. And don’t be upset by snappy or sour people at breakfast: they probably have a pain somewhere and seeing you apparently without one, drives them nuts. If someone has something to say, or wants to confide a problem, do listen. Smother your own impatience as best you can with things as they are. Reach out and touch when you might feel the urge to strike out...

“One last thought. Pray about this before you move. ‘What is my mission in such a community? Is it real to me, and for me? If it’s to love your neighbor as Christ loves—care what happens to her/him—so that you can accept and forgive, enjoy that funny one across the table—then you needn’t be bored or unhappy. You have a mission. It’s important at any age, but for an oldster, it’s vital to have a sense of mission. It’s life-giving and life-long.”

*--Excerpt from a letter of one recently moved to a retirement home*

### **IV. FOR THE SICK**

#### **When in Pain**

Lord Jesus Christ, you have known pain. By your patience you have given an example of faith and obedience to your Father’s will. In the pain which I now experience allow me to know your presence, strengthen my faith when I would despair, and give me the assurance of your eternal love for me.  
AMEN.

#### **Before Surgery**

Almighty God, my heavenly Father, as you have always sent angels to do your healing work, so you have sent men and women as instruments of your healing now. Bless the surgeon who will attend me, that their knowledge and skill might bring the healing you desire. Grant to me the confidence to know that all my days are in your loving care; through Jesus Christ my Lord.  
AMEN.

#### **For the Sick**

Heavenly Father, giver of life and health: comfort and relieve thy sick servants, and give them power of healing to those who minister to their needs, that \_\_\_\_\_ may be strengthened in their (his/her) weakness and have

confidence in thy loving care; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. AMEN.

## V. NURSING HOMES

Give, O Lord, Thy compassionate understanding to us, who can no longer care for ourselves. Be present within my heart here in this nursing home. I have lost my independence but gained security and have taken from my family and friends any further cause to worry about me. Keep me from making unnecessary demands upon the nurses and from being dreary when people come to see me. Guide me in finding ways in which I can help those around me. When my strength decreases and my limitations increase, grant me release from frustrations by finding other useful ways to serve the. AMEN.

--Mary C. White

Shut up in this little room—surrounded by these four bare walls, keep me, O Lord, from feeling cut off from life. Let the air I breathe and the light I see be the signs to me of the life that comes from outside. Let the kindness that surrounds me and the care that never lets me go, be the center of a world too big to cramp me and too good to blot me out. AMEN.

--Theodore Parker Ferris

### Forgetting our Pains

O God, when I think of thee I forget my aches and pains. Fill my mind with cares and concerns so great that they will crowd out my little complaints. Help me to accept my physical limitations and take them without wishing I were made in a different way. Thou hast made me as I am and I have not always done the best with what I have. Let me always remember what I have come through. If I must miss things that other people seem to enjoy, help me to let them go, without losing either my gladness or my love. AMEN.

--Theodore Parker Ferris

## VI. FACING DEATH

May I grow warmer as I grow older, O Lord,  
gentler as I grow wiser,  
unafraid of life and undismayed by death.

May we who feel the infirmity of years be constantly aware of Your enfolding presence. Compose our spirits, O Lord, for a change of worlds, and at the end give us rest in the Everlasting Arms.

O God, be with me when I enter the Valley of the Shadow. May I fear no evil, for the death of my Lord has made Him Lord of Death. AMEN.

--Mary B. Edgerly, age 90 (with permission)

## **For the Dying**

Teach us, O Lord, to live as those prepared to die. When the summons comes, soon or late, teach us to die as those prepared to live; that living or dying we may be with thee, and nothing henceforth, either in life or in death, shall be able to separate us from thy love, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

*--J.B. Bernardin's Book of Burial Services*

Lord of life and death, we thank you for the fullness of days which you have given this your child and for the richness of her life among us. We place her in your loving care this night and all her remaining days on earth, happy that there is light at eventide. Be it unto her according to your will. AMEN.

*--Virginia Huntington*

O Father of all, we pray to thee for those who are entering into thy nearer presence. Grant them thy peace; let light perpetual shine upon them; and in thy loving wisdom and almighty power, work in them the full purpose of thy perfect will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

## **VI. GRIEVING**

O Father of all, we pray to thee for those we love, but see no longer. Grant them thy peace; let light perpetual shine upon them; and in thy loving wisdom and almighty power work in them the good purpose of thy perfect will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

We seem to give them back to thee, dear God, who gavest them to us. Yet as thou didst not lose them in giving, so we have not lost them by their return...For what is thine is ours, always, if we are thine. And life is eternal; and love is immortal; and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up, strong Son of God, that we may see further; cleanse our eyes that we may know ourselves nearer to our beloved who are with thee... that where they are and thou art, we too may be. AMEN.

## **For those who weep**

Almighty God, who hast taught us that those who mourn shall be comforted, grant that in all our grief we may turn unto thee, because our need is beyond the hope of men and women, grant us the peace of thy consolation and the joy of thy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Heavenly Father, to whom all our sorrows are known, grant me the comfort of thy grace in my loss and loneliness. I thank thee for the love that has been mine and that even now is mine, since we are still one in thee. Give me day by day strength to bear my burden and help me to live each day in the light of your love until my life's end. AMEN.

O Lord who cannot fully share my sorrow until I give it to you and whose grief is not one with mine until I make it so, help me always to turn to you in trouble that I may be truly one with you. AMEN.

--C. FitzSimmons Allison

Almighty God, Father of mercies and giver of comfort; deal graciously, we pray, with those who mourn; that, casting all their care on you, they may know the consolation of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Have compassion, O merciful Lord, on all who are mourning for those dear to them, and on all who are lonely and desolate. Be thou their comforter and friend; give them such earthly solace as thou deemest best for them, bringing them to the fuller knowledge of thy love; do thou wipe away all their tears; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

## VIII. LITANIES AND BEATITUDES

### Litany of Thanks

LEADER: Thanks be to you, O Lord, who has held us in your hand from birth until this day, and who has told us that we are precious in your sight.

PEOPLE: **May we praise and serve you until our life's end.**

LEADER: Help us to remember that long life is a gift not granted to everyone; and we pray that whatever wisdom, knowledge, and fullness of love we may have attained in the past may be used in the present in your service.

PEOPLE: **We thank you for the years you have given us, and the years of serving which may lie ahead.**

LEADER: We thank you for the friends who have supported us throughout our lives and who surround us today: for those who have laughed and rejoiced with us, and shared the joy of living and loving; for those who have grieved and wept with us, and held our hands when the way was too rough to walk alone, for they have taught us compassion; for those who have needed and need today to have us reach out and hold their hands, and so allowed us to be ministers of your love.

PEOPLE: **Help us, dear Lord, to be a friend to all who need us.**

LEADER: We thank you for the gift of memories: the happy and joyous ones that sweeten our days and nights; the painful and lonely ones that have made us draw closer to you and taught us faith and trust; the embarrassing and shameful ones which keep us humble and tolerant and understanding. May we keep them as precious gifts, and never be tempted to make a prison of them that would keep us from living in the present. Help us to remember that the precious moment is the present moment.

PEOPLE: **Let us face new memories with courage and faith, and find you afresh in each one.**

LEADER: All thanks and praise to you, Young Prince of Glory, who gave yourself up to the Cross in the fullness of your youth, that we might truly live out all our days in communion with you and our Father, God.

**AMEN.**

*--Delia Doll*

## LITANY

Beloved god, from the loving heart of your divine wisdom you created the processes of life; wondrous cycles of growing, changing, becoming, transforming all that is – plants and creatures, women and men, earth and stars.

**For this oneness of your precious earth, we thank you God.**

To delight your heart and ours, you issued forth the seasons of the year: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter; you give to all that lives sequential times of beauty.

**For such splendor, we thank you, God.**

In your longing for community for all that is, you made us too, to long for others, to search life for its meanings, not knowing it is you for whom we seek.

**For your compelling mystery we thank you, God.**

That we might know you, and claim the promise of our humanity, you sent your son, our Lord, with gifts – forgiveness, love, freedom, hope – for us, and for us to share with others.

**For trusting us with lifelong ministry, we thank you God.**

Through your son, you show us the way to live your ways, with grace to change our willfulness to a willingness that heeds your call, and grace to offer our dependencies to risk a witness for your kingdom.

**For giving life this meaning, we thank you God.**

Blessed Creator, daily you seek to renew and transform our hearts with the joy of knowing you. You call us to come closer, to “see you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly” until the day we die, and are lifted fully into your kingdom...beloved and forgiven.

**For all this, we praise and thank you, God.**

AMEN.

--Dr. Emma Lou Benignus

## **A Litany of Thanksgiving for Life**

*(Based on a prayer by Lloyd Casson)*

LEADER: O God, the giver of life, we yield thee thanks and praise for every season of life. For the nurturing spring time of birth and childhood; for its times of sweet innocence and wide-eyed discovery; for the gift of play and laughter and tears; and for the endless hope.

### **We praise thee, Lord God**

Leader: For the busy summer of adult years; for the privilege of creating and nurturing; and for the hard learnings, the joys and sorrows, the pain and fulfillment which this season always brings.

### **We praise thee, Lord God**

Leader: For the brilliance of the autumn season; for fruitful harvest from past labor; for the sense of new beauty, capacity, and opportunity amidst the anxiety of falling leaves.

### **We praise thee, Lord God**

Leader: And, O God, we give thanks for the shorter days of the winter years the burdens and joys which they bring, for the longer nights for remembering; the loving support from others; for increased vision and wisdom in spite of diminished strength; and for high hopes for the next spring and new life in thine eternal presence

### **We praise thee, Lord God**

## **A Litany of Preparation for Dying**

O guiding and Creating Father, you sent forth your Spirit long before our remembering; and your Word, Jesus Christ, came to forbears whom we do not now know. Messengers, prophets, saints and servants of every kind proclaim you and make straight your way. Prepare me now to see you face to face. Make ready my heart, teach my mind, bend my will, quicken my love. Cleanse me and give me your blessing, so that living or dying, I may never cease to call out your name.

For all who have witnessed to you, in every place and time; and for all who have brought the Gospel to me [especially ...],

**I give you thanks and praise**

For all who have loved me and cared for me from infancy upwards [especially..]

**I give you thanks and praise**

For my father and mother, whom I remember now with love

**I give you thanks and praise**

For the young [especially ...] and for the generations yet to come,

**I give you thanks and praise**

For teaching me of the world's needs so that I may have direction for my prayers and my service

**I give you thanks and praise**

For the beauties of seasons, of arts, and of the lives of my friends by which I have seen your hand displayed

**I give you thanks and praise**

For my own desire to care, to help, and to pray so that I have not forgotten my discipleship of your Presence

**I give you thanks and praise**

For helping me to remember all the love and blessing which I have received in my lifetime, for all that has sustained those I love, the help that has upheld me, and for the hopes that have led me toward you

**I give you thanks and praise**

Through all my searchings, Almighty Father, I beseech you to purify my conscience by your daily presence, so that whenever I shall come to you or you shall come to me, you shall find me a mansion prepared for yourself, through Jesus Christ my Savior and Redeemer forever. AMEN.

## **Beatitudes for Friends of the Aged**

Blessed are those who remember that the Commandment is to honor me, not to patronize me.

Blessed are those who remember that “growing old” is still “growing”.

Blessed are those who know that aging is not a sin.

Blessed are those who remember that I am still interested in the present, and that when I talk about the past, it is usually to provide wisdom for the present.

Blessed are those who respect my desire to take care of myself as far and as long as possible.

Blessed are those who know that I still like and need to give and receive affection, including physical affection, and do not recoil at the thought of touching me or being touched by me.

Blessed are those who realize dementia is not inevitable always but can be prevented and often reversed.

Blessed are those who do not talk about me in my presence as if I were not there, for they realize that even were I supposedly senile or have suffered a stroke, I can still hear and perceive, though I may be unable to talk back.

Blessed are those who remember that death is a fact of life and do not insist on compounding my final suffering with the indignity of inhumane mechanical efforts to keep me lingering as a breathing, heart-beating corpse.

## IX. WORDS OF WISDOM

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older, and will someday be old.

Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.

Release me from craving to try to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details – give me wings to get to the point.

I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. Help me to endure them with patience.

But seal my lips on my own aches and pains – they are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint – some of them are so hard to live with – but a sour oldster is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy.

With all my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all – but Thou knowest, Lord that I want a few friends at the end.

--ANONYMOUS