

Celebrating the Gift of Life

Environment As a setting for celebrating a birthday, prepare a place of symbols that speak of the life of the individual being celebrated. Be simple with not more than three symbols to allow focus.



Gathering

Leader: _____ (address the person by name), today we gather to remember that life is a precious gift from our God and that your life is a sacred gift to us who know and love you. We come to give thanks, to give our blessings to you and to receive blessings from your hands. Together may we be inspired and strengthened as we continue this life journey together.

Prayer (together): O God, Source and Sustainer of all life, we ask your blessing on our sister/brother _____ (name) as we rejoice with her/him in this anniversary celebration.

Pour forth the gifts of your Spirit as we open ourselves to renewal and new insights to live our lives as gifts given in love as we continue to grow in our love for you and for one another. We pray this with confidence and trust in you who embraces each of us in love from our first day into eternal days with you. Amen.



Voices of Wisdom

Leader: We now listen to voices of wisdom reflecting on the gift of life. (Select from the following)

1

This life, you must know as the tiny splash of a raindrop.

A thing of beauty that disappears as it comes into being.

Therefore, set your goal. Make use of every day and every night.

tibetan buddhist - tsongkhapa

2

You spoke to me today, my Beloved.

You blessed me by revealing an aspect of Your countenance.

From the bush by the side of the trail,
You call out to me,
stopping my movement,
stilling my legs,
transfixing my gaze in awe.

I see jeweled beads of rain from the night's storm,
lying sprinkled on leaves

Like translucent crystal gems arranged in unique patterns on hundreds of oval green velvet carpets.

You draw my eye to embrace each one, from the very smallest—smaller than a grain of salt—to the largest—fully ripe like round pearls.

Each one perfect and perfectly placed.

Some defy gravity as they cling to the edge of a leaf.

Others line up like the gemstones of a necklace strung along the leaf's center line.

And then you begin to speak so that I would understand.

And you lead me to know that each droplet, regardless of size or position is like a human soul, irreplaceably precious in Your eyes.

Though seemingly distinct, each is lovingly fashioned from the same essence, the water of Life.

You whisper that though apparently separate, each is connected with all others through the unified web of leaves, stems and branches that form a whole plant.

Each is nourished by the same roots and earth, air, water, and sun all of which You sustain and nurture in Your resplendent heart.

Oh my Beloved, Oh ever faithful One, thank you for Your blessing that opens my eyes to see and understand the workings of Your love.

ronald bedrick - april 2004



You are a child of the universe,
no less than
the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not
it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is
unfolding as it should.

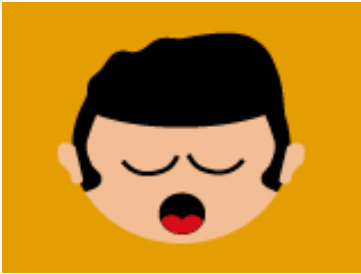
Therefore be at peace with God,
whatever you conceive God to be,
and whatever
your labors and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life,
keep peace with your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery,
and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world.

Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

desiderata - max ehrmann - 1927

(Readings 1, 2, 3 from World Prayers)



Psalm 104

Praise of God the Creator

Bless your God, O my soul!

O God, my God,

you are great indeed.

You are clothed

with majesty and glory,

robed in light as with a cloak.

How varied are your works, O God!

In wisdom you have made them all;

the earth is full of your creatures.
All of these look to you
to give them food in due time.
When you send forth your breath,
they are created,
and you renew
the face of the earth.

I will sing to my God all my life;
I will sing praise to my God
while I live.

Bless your God, O my soul!
Alleluia!

Blessings

Leader: Having listened to these words, let us now pray for God's blessing on _____ whom we honor this day.

May this day bring you renewed joy in the gift of life you have received and lead you forth with new energy to continue to serve God and others in ever greater love.

All: We ask God's blessing of joy upon you.

May you always know the peace that God alone can give as you trust in God's faithfulness to you.

All: We ask God's blessing of peace upon you.

May our love for you always be held in your heart as an assurance of God's tender love for you.

All: We ask the blessing of God's love upon you.

Leader: Each one present is asked to pray a word of blessing for _____.

(Pause for blessings.)

Leader: Let us now remember those whose lives are in need of special blessings these days.



O God, we pray for your gift of peace for all peoples whose lives are torn apart through the violence of war.

All: O God, grant them your peace.

God of healing, we pray for your healing touch for all whose bodies feel the pain of illness and disease.

All: O God, grant them your gift of healing and strength.

God of love we ask your blessing for those who are lonely, abandoned, and in distress because of lack of our love.

All: O God, grant them the gift of love through your people who follow you.

Pause for any additional prayers.

Leader: _____ (name of one being honored), we have come together today because of the gift you are to each of us, we ask now to receive your words of blessing for our lives.

Closing Song

After this, conclude with a song of blessing. Suggestions: "May the Christ Light" or "May the Greatest Love" by Kathy Sherman, OSF.

All Is One CD