

# **“Joy and Grief are Woven Fine: Perspectives on Love and Loss in Our Latter Years”**

## **Webinar for Forest Dwelling, Oct. 16, 2021**

Blessed be the longing that brought you here  
And quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to listen to the voice of desire  
That disturbs you when you have settled for something safe.

May you have the wisdom to enter generously into your own unease,  
To discover the new direction your longing wants you to take.

May you come to accept your longing as divine urgency.

May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.

*(from *To Bless the Space Between Us* by John O’Donohue)*

### *Clearances by Seamus Heaney*

*When all the others were away at Mass  
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.  
They broke the silence, let fall one by one  
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:  
Cold comforts set between us, things to share  
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.  
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes  
From each other's work would bring us to our senses.*

So while the parish priest at her bedside  
Went hammer and tongs at prayers for the dying  
And some were responding and some crying

I remembered her head bent towards my head,  
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives --  
Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

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Be each saint in heaven,  
Each sainted woman in heaven,  
Each angel in heaven  
Stretching their arms for you,  
Smoothing the way for you,  
When you go thither  
Over the river hard to see;  
Oh when you go thither home  
Over the river hard to see. (*Carmina Gadelica* III, 203)

“We keep house among a great cloud of witnesses.” Waldo Williams,  
Welsh poet

“A person without a soul friend is like a body without a head.”  
Attributed to St. Brigid of Ireland

“In prayer, to begin where you are not is a poor beginning. To begin  
where you are may take courage or compromise or painful truth telling.  
Whatever it takes, it’s wise to begin there. We learn to say, “Hello to  
here.” Padraig O’Tuama

“You are the place I stand when my feet are sore.” Irish saying

“One of the qualities that you can develop, particularly in your older  
years, is a sense of great compassion for yourself. When you visit the  
wounds within the temple of memory, you should not blame yourself

for making bad mistakes that you greatly regret. Sometimes you have grown unexpectedly through these mistakes. Frequently, in a journey of the soul, the most precious moments are the mistakes. They have brought you to a place that you would otherwise have always avoided. You should bring a compassionate mindfulness to your mistakes and wounds. Endeavor to inhabit the rhythm you were in at that time. If you visit this configuration of your soul with forgiveness in your heart, it will fall into place itself. When you forgive yourself, the inner wounds begin to heal. You come in out of the exile of hurt into the joy of inner belonging.” (From *Anamcara* by John O’Donohue)

### **Blessing for Old Age**

May the light of your soul mind you.

May all your worry and anxiousness about your age  
Be transfigured.

May you be given wisdom for the eyes of your soul  
To see this as a time of gracious harvesting.  
May you have the passion to heal what has hurt you,  
And allow it to come closer and become one with you.

May you have great dignity,  
And a sense of how free you are,  
Above all, may you be given the wonderful gift  
Of meeting the eternal light that is within you.

May you be blessed;  
And may you find a wonderful love  
In your self for your self.

(From *To Bless the Space Between Us* by John O’Donohue)