

The Best is Yet To Be

Meditation and Prayer
In Celebration of the Life of Frederic R. Birdsall

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Let us be in the spirit of prayer
in the presence of the Creative Source of all being,
in whom we live and move and have our being –
the Sacred Mystery hidden in a cloud of unknowing.

Eternal God, Source, Guide and Goal of all that is,
from You we receive life as a gift
and to You our life returns.

In the Psalmist's poetic expression,
*You send forth your breath, your Spirit,
and they are created.
You take away their breath,
they die.*

We find our comfort in life and in death
that we are not our own
but belong to You,
a faithful God whose steadfast love embraces us
on this fascinating and fragile human pilgrimage.
And thus we find it most natural
at such a time as this, in such a place as this,
to lift up our hearts in worship,
to bow in Your presence before the mystery of life
and the reality of death.

We worship
for we are aware
of the wonder of creation,
its beauty and its terror,
its loveliness and its pain.
We turn to You, O God;
we rest in You;
we trust where we do not know.

In You we hope,
and to You we commend
those we've loved and lost awhile.

Good and Gracious God,
You breathe into us
and we have the gift of life;
we commend our breath to you
and, thus, our earthly pilgrimage is ended.
You, O God, are the source and giver of life,
and to You all life returns.

In the beginning,
in the end,
You are God.
And in the meantime,
this in-between time,
You uphold us with everlasting arms.
You overshadow us with a gracious Presence.
You bear us up on eagle's wings;
beneath your sheltering wings we find refuge and peace.

Sacred Mystery of all being, of our being,
consciously aware of our lives in your light,
we worship.
We know that all will be well,
all will be well,
all manner of things will be well.

That was the confident trust of the one whose life we celebrate today. This one we've loved and lost awhile, our Fred, beloved husband, father, friend. Quiet, unassuming, competent in his profession – images tumble through our minds as we remember him. We will always smile as we think of him because he was our good humor man – story upon story he sent into cyber space, bringing to a wide circle of friends delight and laughter. Fred stories abound and the twinkle in his eye was contagious.

Yet there was more – there was in Fred a passion for peace, for justice. An astute observer of our times, he was an advocate for human decency, civility and fairness. He was a truly good man who stood for a kinder and gentler nation and righteousness and justice in society. Fred cared and he made his voice heard for the values he embraced. With open mind he continued to wonder and to grow in knowledge and understanding, and with good heart he embodied compassion.

And thus, O God, we celebrate Your grace in his life
and remember him with affection and respect.

Knowing he was resting on everlasting arms
in the embrace of Grace,
he saw his end,
and in confidence he chose to enter Your presence, O God,
resting in his final labored breathing
in the abyss of Your love.

And in such a time as this,
in such a place as this,
Gracious God,
we are grateful above all
that the end is not broken health and dreams unfulfilled,
swallowed up in death,
but rather the confidence that
to live is to live unto the Lord,
and to die is to die unto the Lord,
so then whether we live or die,
we are the Lord's.

Receive our thanksgiving, O God.
Grant the comfort of Your Spirit,
renew our hope and lead us on
in the confidence that nothing can ever separate us
from Your love in Christ Jesus our Lord,
who taught us to pray, saying,

*“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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.*

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