**Reflections and Blessings**

**Reflections can be used as a means to settle the congregation before a graduation mass, following the *Prayer After Communion* or as blessings at the end.**

**Dare to Dream**

Let nothing hold you back from exploring your biggest dreams,

wishes and aspirations. Don’t be afraid to dream big and to follow your

dreams wherever they may lead you.

Open your eyes to their beauty;

open your mind to their magic;

open your heart to their possibilities.

Dare to dream.

Whether they are in colour or in black and white,

whether they are big or small,

easily attainable or almost impossible l look to you dream,

And make them become reality.

Wishes and hopes are nothing u until you take the first step

toward making them something!

Dare to dream,

Because only by dreaming will you ever discover

who you are, what you want, and what you can do.

Don’t be afraid to take risks to become involved

to make a commitment Do whatever it takes to make

your dreams come true.

Always believe in miracles, and always believe in you!

**Don’t Quit**

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,

When the road you’re trudging seems all up hill,

When the funds are low and the debts are high

And you want to smile but you have no sigh,

When care it pressing you down a bit,

**Rest, if you must, but don’t quit**

Life is queer with its twist and turns,

As everyone of us sometimes learns,

And many failure turns about

 When he might have won had he struck it out;

**Don’t give up** though, the pace seems slow—

 **You may succeed with another blow**

Success is failure turned inside out—

The silver tint of the clouds of doubt

And you never can tell how close you are,

It may be near when it seems far;

**So stick to the fight** when you’re hardest hit –

It’s when things seem worst that **you must not quit.**

**Hold high the torch!**

Hold high the torch! You did not light its glow-- 'Twas given you by other hands, you know. 'Tis yours to keep it burning bright, Yours to pass on when you no more need light; For there are other feet that we must guide, And other forms go marching by our side; Their eyes are watching every smile and tear, And efforts which we think are not worthwhile, Are sometimes just the very helps they need, Actions to which their souls would give most heed; So that in turn they'll hold it high and say, "I watched someone else carry it this way." If brighter paths should beckon you to choose, Would your small gain compare with all you'd lose? Hold high the torch! You did not light its glow-- 'Twas given you by other hands, you know. I think it started down its pathway bright, The day the Maker said: "Let there be light." And He once said, who hung on Calvary's tree-- "Ye are the light of the world."...Go!...Shine--for me.

**Dream Big, Author Unknown**

If there were ever a time to dare, To make a difference, To embark on something worth doing, It is now. Not for any grand cause, necessarily – But for something that tugs at your heart, Something that is worth your aspiration, Something that is your dream.

You owe it to yourself, To make your days count. Have fun. Dig deep. Stretch. Dream Big. Know though that things worth doing seldom come easy. There will be times when you want to Turn around Pack it up and call it quits. Those times tell you that you are pushing yourself And that you are not afraid to learn by trying. Persist. Because with an idea, determination and the right tools, You can do great things. Let your instincts, your intellect and let your heart guide you. Trust. Believe in the incredible power of the human mind. Of doing something that makes a difference. Of working hard of laughing and hoping of lasting friends of all the things that will cross your path.

Next year, The start of something new, brings the hope of something great.
Anything is possible. There is only one you and you will pass this way but once. Do it right.

***The Spirit of God and the Spirit of the World – please note this is a reflection, not suitable for a Scripture reading***

“What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.” 1 Cor 2:12

*Two readers are needed: one reads the Spirit of God and the other the spirit of the world. In each case the spirit of the world comes first, followed within a couple of seconds by the Spirit of God; then a 10 – 15 second pause before moving on. Ideally the two readers should stand at lecterns at opposite ends of the relevant space.*

1. The spirit of the world says that externals are all important – looks, property, possessions. You are what you have.
2. The spirit of God says that your looks and appearance can be very deceptive. You must look into the heart, into the depth of life to see who we really are.
3. The spirit of the world says that life is a test and success if everything. It abhors failure and disappointment.
4. The spirit of God says that failure can be more important than success. We can learn even from the sad and more difficult times.
5. The spirit of the world says that the great problems – unemployment, ecology, violence – have nothing to do with me. I’ve just got to mind my own patch.
6. The spirit of God says that I am responsible for everyone, everywhere, at all times.
7. The spirit of the world says that love is about things going well, in accord with my plans.
8. The spirit of God says that love is about giving of myself even when I feel that I cannot.
9. The spirit of the world says that there is no such thing as forgiveness because there is no such thing as sin.
10. The spirit of God says that forgiveness is the greatest reality that we know. We sin, we fail, yet we can be freed to go on.
11. The spirit of the world says that honesty and commitment are impossible and don’t really exist.
12. The spirit of God says that honesty and commitment are the only things that matter in the end.
	1. The spirit of the world says that the sick and the disabled are not really alive. Sickness and disability are disastrous.
	2. The spirit of God says that the sick and the disabled are often those who are most alive for they know their dependence; they know that life is not in their control.
13. The spirit of the world says that death is the end of life and proves that life is futile.

2. The spirit of God says that death is not the end of life as the great spirit present in us is not extinguished but transformed.

“A Sacramental People” M Drumm and T Gunning.

*A Piece of Wood*

Every possibility is sleeping in such a piece of wood. It depends on you how you look at it what you see in it – some useless obstacles in your way, fuel to light your fire, material to build a fence around your isolation, to build a house – a door – a table.

Or a challenge, waiting just for you, to be set free, to be called to life.

The woodcarver, the artist, sees it like that. He takes it in his hands, and sees the hidden life, and makes it speak, of growth and death, joy and pain, and all the mysteries of life. All this is contained in a piece of wood.

Our whole life, the world around us, is like such a piece of wood. It depends on us, how we look at it, what we see in it. Shouldn’t we all be artists?

*Henry Rohr*

**A reflection based on Hosea 11**

When you were a child, I loved you. I myself taught you to walk. I took you in my arms. Yet, you did not understand that I was the one looking after you. I led you with reigns of kindness, with leading strings of love. I was like someone who lifts an infant close against his cheek. Stooping down to you, I gave you your food. How could I part with you? How could I give you up?

**Ideals To Live By Nancy Sims**

Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others.



It is because we are different that each of us are special. Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only do what is best for you.



Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them life is meaningless.



Don't let life slip through your fingers by living in the past or in the future. By living one day at a time you live all days of your life.



Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.



Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is the fragile thread that binds us to each other.



Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.



Don't shut love out of your life by saying it is impossible. The fastest way to lose love is to hold to it tightly, and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.



Don't dismiss your dreams. To be without dreams is to be without hope, to be without hope is to be without purpose.



Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you have been, but also where you are going. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savoured each step of the way.

**This is what we are about**

This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.
Amen.

Oscar Romero

**Reflection on Psalm 139**

O God, you know me inside and out, through and through. Everything I do every thought that flits through my mind every step I take, every plan I make, every word I speak. You know my past. You know my future. Your knowledge of me sometimes comforts me, sometimes frightens me but always it is far beyond my understanding. You were present at my very conception. You guided the moulding of my unformed members within the body of my mother. Nothing about me, from beginning to end, was hidden from your eyes. This is mystery and wonder at its deepest and best. May you all-knowing, everywhere – present Spirit continue to search out my feelings and thoughts. Deliver me from that which may hurt or destroy me, and guide me along the path that leads to life. I can accept all this for you have also told me that I am precious in your eyes and you love me.

# The Invitation - Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shrivelled and closed from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself.

If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul. If you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty even when it is not pretty every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, 'Yes.'

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the centre of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

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**Trust in God**

Often your tasks will be many,

And more than you think you can do…

Often the road will be rugged

And the hills insurmountable, too…

But always remember, the hills ahead Are never as steep as them seem,

And with Faith in your heart start upward And climb ‘til you reach your dream,

For nothing in life that is worthy Is ever too hard to achieve

If you have the courage to try it And you have the Faith to believe…

For Faith is a force that is greater Than knowledge or power or skill

And many defeats turn to triumph If you trust in God’s wisdom and will…

For Faith is a mover of mountains, There’s nothing that God cannot do,

So start out today with Faith in your heart

And “climb ‘til your dream comes true”

**Words of challenge to young people taken from Pope Francis at World Youth Day in Brazil.**

 **I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, to swim against the tide**; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes that you are incapable of responsibility, that you are incapable of true love.

Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. **The Church needs you**, your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you. 'Do not be afraid!' When we go to proclaim Christ, it is he himself who goes before us and guides us. When he sent his disciples on mission, he promised: 'I am with you always' (Mt 28:20). And this is also true for us! Jesus does not leave us alone, he never leaves you alone! He always accompanies you.

**Our Deepest Fear**

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

 **Strength and Courage**

It takes strength to be firm and it takes courage to be gentle. It takes strength to conquer and it takes courage to surrender. It takes strength to be certain and it takes courage to have doubt.. It takes strength to fit in and it takes courage to stand out. It takes strength to feel a friend's pain and it takes courage to feel your own pain. It takes strength to endure abuse and it takes courage to stop it.. It takes strength to stand alone and it takes courage to lean on another. It takes strength to love and it takes courage to be loved. It takes strength to survive and it takes courage to live.

 **This is an excerpt from the speech of Malala Yousafzai to the UN on the occasion of her sixteenth birthday,**

*On the ninth of October 2012, the Taliban came onto a school bus and shot 14 year old Malala Yousafzai in the head. They also shot her friends. She was campaigning for education for girls in Pakistan......*

They thought their bullets would silence us, but they failed. Out of the silence came thousands of voices. The terrorists thought that they would change our aims and stop our ambitions but nothing changed in my life except this, weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage were born. I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same and my dreams are the same. I do not want personal revenge against the Taliban. I want education for the Taliban's sons and daughters. This is the compassion I have learnt from Prophet Mohammed, Jesus Christ, Buddha, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. This is what I have learnt from Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa. This is what I have learnt from my father and my mother. This is what my soul is telling me - be peaceful and love others.

There is a saying that the pen is mightier than the sword. This is true. The extremists are afraid of books and pens. They are afraid of education. They are afraid of women. They are afraid of change that equality would bring in our society. We call upon all governments to ensure free and compulsory education. We call upon all governments to fight against terrorism, to protect children. We call upon all the communities to be tolerant, to reject prejudice based on caste, creed, sect, colour or gender. To ensure peace and equality for women. We cannot flourish if half of us are held back.

**Footprints in the Sand**

 One night a man had a dream. He dreamed
he was walking along the beach with the LORD.
Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.
For each scene he noticed two sets of
footprints in the sand: one belonging
to him, and the other to the LORD.
When the last scene of his life flashed before him,
he looked back at the footprints in the sand.
He noticed that many times along the path of
his life there was only one set of footprints.
He also noticed that it happened at the very
lowest and saddest times in his life.
This really bothered him and he
questioned the LORD about it:
"LORD, you said that once I decided to follow
you, you'd walk with me all the way.
But I have noticed that during the most
troublesome times in my life,
there is only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why when
I needed you most you would leave me."
The LORD replied:
"My son, my precious child,
I love you and I would never leave you.
During your times of trial and suffering,
when you see only one set of footprints,
it was then that I carried you."

**Life Is a Journey**

For each of us life is a journey.

Birth is the beginning of this journey

And death is not the end

But the destination

It is a journey that takes us

From youth to age

From innocence to awareness

From ignorance to knowledge

From foolishness to wisdom

From weakness to strength

And often back again

From offence to forgiveness

From loneliness to friendship

From pain to compassion

From fear to faith

From defeat to victory

And from victory to defeat

Until looking backward or ahead

We see that victory does not lie

At some high point along the way

But in having made the journey

Stage by stage

(*Adapted from an old Hebrew prayer)*

**By Paulo Coelho**

A man spent hours watching a butterfly struggling to emerge from its cocoon. It managed to make a small hole, but its body was too large to get through it. After a long struggle, it appeared to be exhausted and remained absolutely still.
The man decided to help the butterfly and, with a pair of scissors, he cut open the cocoon, thus releasing the butterfly. However, the butterfly’s body was very small and wrinkled and its wings were all crumpled.
The man continued to watch, hoping that, at any moment, the butterfly would open its wings and fly away. Nothing happened; in fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its brief life dragging around its shrunken body and shrivelled wings, incapable of flight.
What the man – out of kindness and his eagerness to help – had failed to understand was that the tight cocoon and the efforts that the butterfly had to make in order to squeeze out of that tiny hole were Nature’s way of training the butterfly and of strengthening its wings.
Sometimes, a little extra effort is precisely what prepares us for the next obstacle to be faced. Anyone who refuses to make that effort, or gets the wrong sort of help, is left unprepared to fight the next battle and never manages to fly off to their destiny.
(Adapted from a story sent in by Sonaira D’Avila)

**Parent’s Reading**

If I had my child to raise all over again, I’d finger paint more, and point the finger less. I’d do less correcting, and more connecting. I’d take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes. I would care to know less and know how to care more. I’d take more hikes and fly more kites. I’d stop playing serious, and seriously play. I’d run through more fields, and gaze at more stars. I’d do more hugging, and less tugging. I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.

I’d build self-esteem first, and the house later. I’d teach less about the love of power, And more about the power of love

**Look To This Day**

Look to this day! For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course, Lie all the verities and realities of your existence, The bliss of growth, The glory of action, The splendor of achievement, For yesterday is but a dream, And tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness, And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Attributed to Kalidasa

**Reflections of a Parent**

I give you life, but cannot live it for you.

I can give you directions, but I cannot be there to lead you.

I can teach you right from wrong, but I cannot always decide for you.

I can buy you beautiful clothes, but I cannot make you beautiful inside.

I can offer you advice, but I cannot accept it for you.

I can give you love, but I cannot force it upon you.

I can teach you to share, but I cannot make you unselfish.

I can teach you respect, but I cannot force you to show honour.

I can advise you about friends, but I cannot choose them for you.

I can tell you about alcohol and drugs, but I can’t say ‘no’ for you.

I can tell you about lofty goals, but I can’t achieve them for you.

I can teach you about kindness, but I can’t force you to be gracious.

I can pray for you, but I cannot make you walk with God

I can tell you how to live, but I cannot give you eternal life.

I can love you with unconditional love all of my life

……..And I will.

**Blessing**

I wish you …

Happiness … Deep down within

Serenity… With each sunrise

Success …. In each facet of your life

Close and caring friends

Love… That never ends

Knowledge of the grace and love of God

Special memories… Of all the yesterdays

A bright today…with much to be thankful for

A path… That leads to beautiful tomorrows

Dreams… That do their best to come true

And… appreciation… Of all the wonderful things

 About you!

**Blessing**

May the beauty of God always surprise you.

May the freedom of God keep you centred and whole.

May the truthfulness of God bring peace to your heart.

May God’s gift of Christ saturate you with love.

May the wisdom of God’s dream always invite you deeper.

And may the blessing of God, in the company of Christ and the life-giving Spirit guide you now and every minute of your life.

**Quotes**

 My prayer has always been to live the dream that God has dreamed for me and I live inside God's dream because I have learned that God can dream a bigger dream for you than you can dream for yourself. “ Oprah Winfrey

*The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams****.***

Eleanor Roosevelt

 “Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

Martin Luther King.

*We believe in the strength and power of our words, they can change the whole world. One child one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.* Malala Yousafza

**She is Clothed With Strength and Dignity**

**And She Laughs Without Fear of the Future**

**Communion Reflection**

**MAKE YOUR LIFE THE BEST IT CAN BE …**

Each new day is a blank page in the diary of your life. The pen is in your hand, but the lines will not all be written the way you choose; some will come from the world and the circumstances that surround you. But for the many things that are in your control, remember this…

The secret of life is in making your story as beautiful as it can be. Write the dairy of your days and fill the pages with words that come from the heart. As the pages take you through time, you will discover paths that will add to your happiness and your sorrows, but if you can do these things, there will always be hope in your tomorrows.

Follow your dreams. Work hard. Be kind. This is all anyone could ever ask: do you what you can to make the door open on a day that is filled with beauty in some special way. Remember: goodness will be rewarded. Smiles will pay you back. Have fun. Find strength. Be truthful. Have faith. Don’t focus on things you lack. Realize that people are the treasures in life and happiness is the real wealth. Have a diary that describes how you are doing your best, and…..

The rest will take care of itself.

*Douglas Pagels*

***A Graduate’s Prayer***

Father, I have knowledge, so I pray you'll show me now
How to use it wisely
and find a way somehow
To make the world I live in
a little better place,
And make life, with its problems,
a bit easier to face...

Grant me faith and courage
and put purpose in my days,
And show me how to serve Thee
in the most effective ways
So all my education,
my knowledge and my skill,
May find their true fulfillment
as I learn to do Thy will...

And may I ever be aware
in everything I do
That knowledge comes from learning -
And wisdom comes from You.



**Final Blessing –Irish Blessing**

May the blessing of light be upon you, light on the outside, light on the inside.

With God’s light shining on you, may your heart glow with warmth, like a turf fire that welcomes friends and strangers alike.

May the light of the Lord shine from your eyes, like a candle in the window welcoming the weary travellers.

May the blessing of God’s soft rain be on you, falling on your head,

refreshing your soul with the sweetness of little flowers newly blooming.

May the strengths of the winds of Heaven bless you, carrying the rain to wash your spirit clean, sparkling after in the sunlight.

May the blessings of God’s earth be on you and as you walk the roads may you always have a kind word for those you meet.

May you understand the strength and power of God

in a thunderstorm in Winter and the quiet beauty of creation in the calm of a Summer sunset.

And may you come to realize, that, insignificant as you may seem in this great Universe….you are an important part of God’s plan.

May God watch over you and keep you safe from harm.