

Toward My Father's House

HOPE-FILLED MEDITATIONS
FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

Mary Jane Mason
1935-1992



Liguori

Dedication

*To my wonderful husband and God-given
family who wholeheartedly supported my
decision to forgo chemotherapy.
To Fr. Steve Makranyi who helped me relate
my decisions to the will of the Father.
Thank you.*

Imprimi Potest: Richard Thibodeau, CSsR, Provincial
Denver Province, The Redemptorists

ISBN 978-0-7648-0698-8

© 1993, 2000 Liguori Publications

To order, call 1-800-325-9521 or go to Liguori.org

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications.

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of the Redemptorists. To learn more about the Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Bible with Revised New Testament*, copyright © 1986, and the *Revised Psalms*, copyright © 1991, by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used with permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Lynne Condellone

Printed in the United States of America

20 21 22 23 24 / 9 8 7 6 5

Introduction

When first diagnosed with a terminal illness, many thoughts and feelings filled me. *Thank you, Father, for the invitation to come home. Am I ready? Has my life been all that you expected of me?*

There were feelings of excitement at the thought of heaven. *How must I prepare? What must I do to enhance my spiritual life?* There were feelings of sadness at leaving those who are dear to me: my husband and children, relatives and friends.

Now I journey toward my Father's house. Throughout our lives, we listen to the Word of God and are comforted by his words in times of sorrow. We are instructed by Scripture and revelation on how to live so as to reach heaven and enjoy eternal peace and rest. Why are we so afraid to say yes when we finally receive the invitation to come home?

For the past few months, I have experienced many phases of Christ's life on earth. I have come to know the unimportance of material things and what people think of me. I have grown to know and love the life of the Spirit. Praised be our loving Father, who cares for us so well!

Mary Jane Mason

Time

*There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the
heavens.*

A time to be born, and a time to die....

*A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance...
a time to keep, and a time to cast away.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-2,4,6

When God reveals to us that our time to leave this earth is approaching, we weep a little. Indeed, it is sad to think of leaving those we love. But we set those feelings aside and go on living each day we're given. We live, confident that God is holding our hand to help us through this distressing time.

We hold on to a sense of humor. We need to laugh at our disabilities, to humble ourselves. We recognize our total dependence on God for our very existence.

We mourn. Ultimately, however, we dance. We dance at the thrill of entering the kingdom. We rejoice that our time here is ending and we will soon enter our Father's house.

We recognize and value life's most precious gifts. We cast away all attachment to things of this world and strive to enter fully into the life of the Spirit.

If the Father has loved us so much as to give us the knowledge of impending death, then he surely will send his Spirit to guide us to him. We open our heart to receive his inspirations and understand that death is not to be feared. It is but the entrance to eternal life.

Powerlessness

“You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above.”

JOHN 19:11

After accepting the fact that there is no cure, we are ready to accept God's divine plan for our future. We are ready to accept our own powerlessness and the powerlessness of others. If God loves us so much as to give us “fair warning,” then we certainly owe God the courtesy of becoming one with him in living out his will each remaining minute of our life. For example, if a medication is going to affect our ability to be the loving person God designed, then we have the right to refuse that treatment.

Standing in the Sandals of Jesus

Because the medical professionals are primarily concerned with physical treatments, they often fail to understand the workings of the Spirit in a person preparing to enter eternal life. They often become as Pilate, feeling a sense of power over our lives. But their power comes from the divine Healer, and if it is not the Healer's will to heal, they will have no power whatsoever.

We stand in the sandals of Jesus and accept the Father's plan for us. We offer our sufferings, our very lives, that others might be brought to God for all eternity. One with God, we long to fulfill God's will. For he is a loving Father who wants to bring us home. We abandon ourselves to powerlessness—and into the hands of God.

Compassion

*The LORD is with me; I am not afraid;
what can mortals do against me?
The LORD is with me as my helper;
I shall look in triumph on my foes.
Better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put one's trust in mortals.*

PSALM 118:6-8

It's hard for the doctor to give us the news; it's hard for us to hear it. In this time of distress, we turn to our Father for help; we do not become angry with the doctor. We draw on God's ever-present grace as we try to accept the fact that it's time for us to leave this earth for a celestial dwelling place.

All of our lives we have heard about the glories of the heavenly kingdom. Yet, when faced with its realities, we begin to fear and lament.

***The “Yellow Brick Road”
That Leads Home***

Now is the time to turn to our Creator and ask for the grace and strength we need to follow the “yellow brick road” that leads us to our Father's house.

Now is the time to pray for those who will medically care for us. Theirs is a difficult and helpless task, for they know they cannot offer us a cure. They need us—and we need them. They need our compassion as they struggle with their own helplessness—and we need their support in offering us whatever forms of relief are available.

Treatment

*Make known to me your ways, LORD;
teach me your paths.*

*Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.*

For you I wait all the long day.

PSALM 25:4-5

Determining a course for treatment is for some a difficult decision; for others, there is never a doubt. How will our decision affect those who love us?

Trust these decisions into God's loving hands. Life is a series of sufferings and joys. And though there will be some period of suffering for all, God, in his mercy, will grant understanding and eventual peace.

Death is inevitable for each of us. Our acceptance and preparation for it brings us the inner peace we hoped for—for ourselves, our family, and our friends. We learn not to fear what others think, not to worry about things out of our control, not to fear suffering. Our merciful God grants us peace.

Choose to Love

Medical personnel seldom understand the workings of the Spirit. They conclude that our attitude is fatalistic. But fatalism is an anticipation of ruination and destruction. Acceptance, on the other hand, is

receiving with approval and satisfaction. If we accept God's will, our attitude is truly healthy. We may choose to forgo treatment that may alter our physical and emotional behavior and make us unpleasant to be around. In making that decision, we choose to love; we choose to be the loving person we were created to be. If we wait patiently for our Savior, he will make known his ways to us, and our decision will be one with his.

Sadness

*Let me alone, that I may recover a little
Before I go whence I shall not return,
to the land of darkness and of gloom.*

JOB 10:20-21

When we receive the news that we have an incurable disease, numerous thoughts race through our mind: fear, anger, sadness, concern for others. As children of God, we turn to our heavenly Father for consolation and help.

There is sadness at the idea of leaving those we dearly love. Yet, we need not be concerned for the welfare of others. God will place comforting arms around them. Those who love us are left to serve God where they are needed. God will be their consolation and joy in this time of sadness.