



DAYS

A scroll with text on it, featuring a parchment-like texture and wooden rollers at the top and bottom. The text is written in a cursive font.

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends of Nano,

As we prepare to celebrate our Congregational Feast – the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, we are invited to join together in prayer and contemplation as we ponder once again the Mystery at the heart of Mary of the Presentation.

*We are most grateful to our Presentation Sisters in Victoria, Australia who prepared the **Nine Days** reflective prayer for our Novena this year.*

*As we live through this very different time in our world, when we are standing on uncertain ground because of the pandemic, **Nine Days** invites us into a reflective space, to listen deeply like Mary, to God's invitation for us.*

May Mary bless us with the gifts of contemplative listening, prophetic courage and faith-filled commitment as we continue to go deep into our unfolding Presentation journey with hope!

Wishing you Blessings as we celebrate this special Feast of Mary of the Presentation,

Julie Veneth Aurea Sharon Love

Nine Days invites us into a reflective space to contemplate the Mystery at the heart of Mary of the Presentation.

We reflect on those iconic Gospel moments which give shape to our understanding and naming of Mary as core to our Presentation spirit and tradition.

We are attuned, as was Mary, as was Nano, to God's call coming to us from the depths of our own experience in our own life.

Nine Days offers space and silence,
sacred time and stillness.

In this year of 2020, a year none of us could have imagined, we allow ourselves to rest in God's presence, trusting and patient, letting life unfold and draw us ever deeper into the Mystery before us.

**Presentation Sisters Victoria, Australia
Presentation Day 2020**

Behold the handmaid of the Lord...Luke 1:38

Presentation

Mary, by your unconditioned Yes,
lean down to us who stammer out our weak assent
and tremble lest God take us at our word.

By your swift love, redeem our paltriness,
when with a sparing hand we dole
from what, unmeasured, has been heaped on us.

Without a backward glance
you followed when He led to Calvary.
Come, lest from that all-demanding love
we turn, Lot's wife, immobile, hard as stone.

Ah, Mary, little one
whom God raised from the depths unto the heights,
help us, we pray, grow small enough again
to marvel at the wonder of our call.

Raphael Consedine pbvm

**Let us pray:
You wait for us
until we are open to you.
We wait for your word
to make us receptive.
Attune us to your voice,
to your silence,
speak and bring your son to us –
Jesus the word of your peace.**

Huub Oosterhuis: *Your Word is Near* p.17



***Mary went into the hill country with haste...
and stayed with Elizabeth about three months.*** Luke 1:39,56



The Visitation

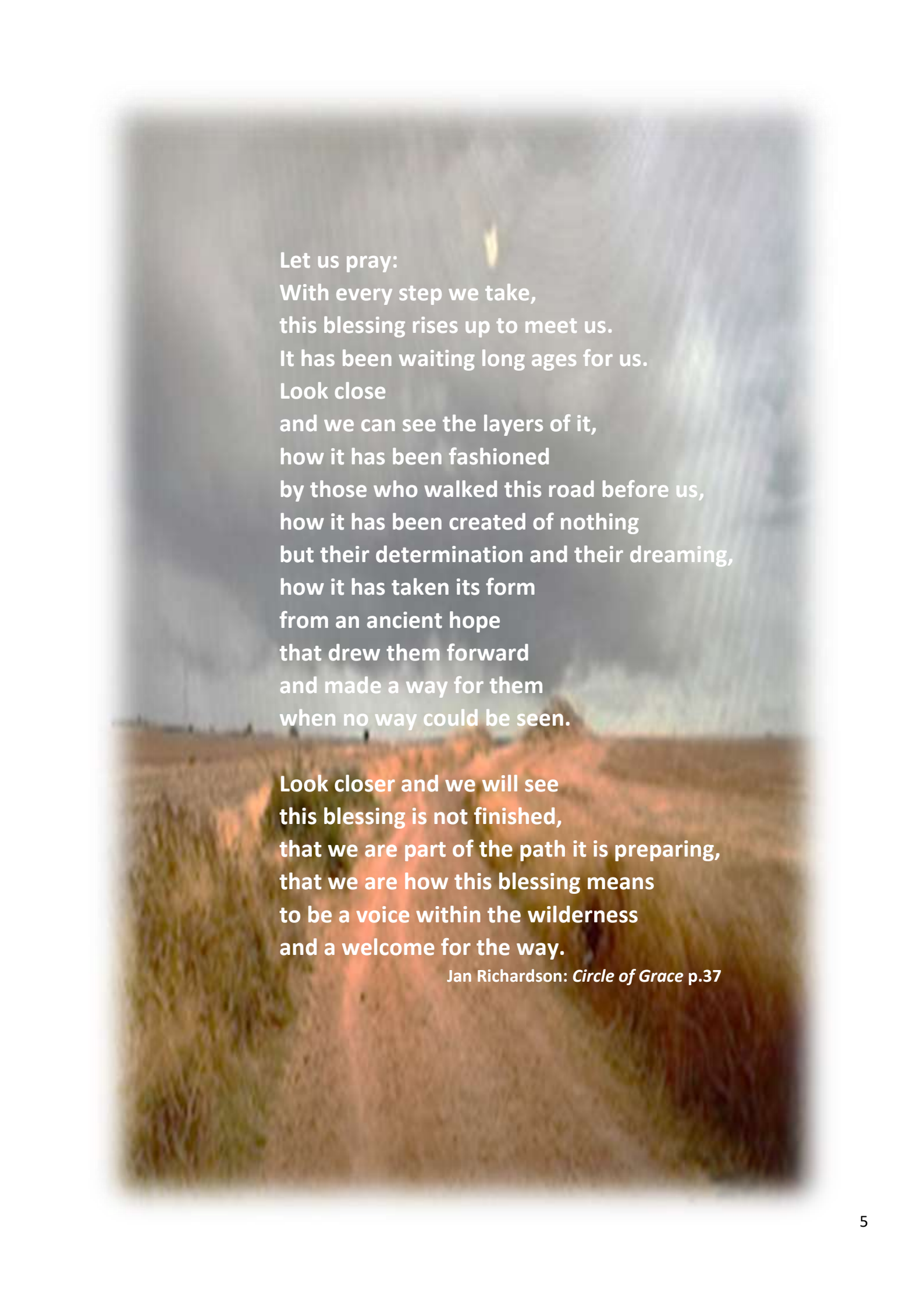
In the morning it takes the mind a while
To find the world again, lost after dream
Has taken the heart to the underworld
To play with the shades of lives not chosen.

She awakens a stranger in her own life,
Her breath loud in the room full of listening.
Taken without touch, her flesh feels the grief
Of belonging to what cannot be seen.

Soon she can no longer bear to be alone.
At dusk she takes the road into the hills.
An anxious moon doubles her among the
stone.
A door opens, the older one's eyes fill.

Two women locked in a story of birth.
Each mirrors the secret the other heard.

John O'Donohue: *Conamara Blues* p.63



Let us pray:
With every step we take,
this blessing rises up to meet us.
It has been waiting long ages for us.
Look close
and we can see the layers of it,
how it has been fashioned
by those who walked this road before us,
how it has been created of nothing
but their determination and their dreaming,
how it has taken its form
from an ancient hope
that drew them forward
and made a way for them
when no way could be seen.

Look closer and we will see
this blessing is not finished,
that we are part of the path it is preparing,
that we are how this blessing means
to be a voice within the wilderness
and a welcome for the way.

Jan Richardson: *Circle of Grace* p.37

***...the time came for her to have her child,
and she gave birth to a son...Luke 2:6,7***

One has to think of him as her son:
looking very like her,
with her walk, her gestures, her patterns of thought,
many of her tastes
and then remember
that this is not some fine mask for another being within,
but the human cast of his very self.

She gave him the humanity that was his;
a humanity including her kind of feeling for him.
.....this Yeshua, this peasant, this child of this Mary.
Fed when he needed feeding,
taught when he needed teaching,
pushed and held back when he needed them both.

His strength and his weakness,
his haunting peculiarity
and his rough and sweat-stained familiarity
bound up inextricably, forever with her own.

Peter Steele SJ



**Let us pray:
God our beloved,
born of a woman's body,
you came that we might look upon you,
and handle you with our own hands.
May we so cherish one another in our bodies
that we may also be touched by you;
through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, Amen.**

Janet Morley: All Desires Known p.6



***Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,
'You see this child:
he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many...,
and a sword will pierce your own soul too...'*** Luke 2:34-35

The Second Music

Now I understand that there are two melodies playing,
one below the other, one easier to hear, the other
lower, steady, perhaps more faithful for being less heard
yet always present.

When all other things seem lively and real,
this one fades. Yet the notes of it
touch as gently as fingertips, as the sound
of the names laid over each child at birth.

I want to stay in that music without striving or cover.
If the truth of our lives is what it is playing,
the telling is so soft
that this mortal time, this irrevocable change,
becomes beautiful. I stop and stop again
to hear the second music.

I hear the children in the yard, a train, then birds.
All this is in it and will be gone.
I set my ear to it as I would to a heart.

Annie Lighthart: *Iron String*

Let us pray:

**Blessed are you who bear the light
in unbearable times,
who testify to its endurance
amid the unendurable,
who bear witness to its persistence
when everything seems in shadow and grief.**

**Blessed are you in whom the light lives,
in whom the brightness blazes –
your heart a chapel,
an altar where in the deepest night can be seen
the fire that shines forth in you
in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope,
in love that illumines every broken thing it finds.**

Jan Richardson: *Circle of Grace* p.47



He then went with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. Luke 2:51

The Gift

Be still, my soul and steadfast.
Earth and heaven both are still watching
though time is draining from the clock
and your walk, that was confident and quick,
has become slow.

So, be slow if you must, but let
the heart still play its true part.
Love still as once you loved, deeply
and without patience. Let God and the world
know you are grateful.
That the gift has been given.

Mary Oliver: *Felicity* p.77

Let us pray:

**May the years take us deeper in our loving.
May the changing in our bodies
open doorways in our souls.
May we have words to tell of love long past innocence
yet grown wise with the seasons
and ripe with wonders still to be found.**


Jan Richardson: *In the Sanctuary of Women* p.302

The mother of Jesus was there... "Do whatever he tells you." John 2:1,5

Cana

It might have been a neurotic's paradise,
With all that water there for endless washing.
The catering shaky, and most of us wondering
What sort of promise such a beginning held
For the couple's days and years. And then the wine
Ran out, clean out. What do you say – 'One always
Likes to be moderate at these affairs'? –
When what you mean is, 'There's more need than they
Can possibly provide for.' Anyhow,
After a while they gave us wine in flagons,
The kind of thing it was a privilege
To drink or think about. I still don't know
Where they found it, how they bought it, why
They kept it until then. I do remember,
Late in the piece, a man who made some toasts
And drank as if he meant them, and then left,
His mother looking thoughtful: that, and the jars
For water, and the way they seemed to glow.

Peter Steele sj: *Marching on Paradise* p.37



**Lord Jesus,
we thank you for inviting us to your table,
for here you show us our lives:
the daily bread of our work and care,
the wine of delight pressed from the fruits
of our creativity and our brokenness.
We celebrate the life that is ours,
the life that is precious in your sight.
We celebrate the life that is yours, pattern of reality for us.
We celebrate the life that is love revealed,
love given and received, love that is lived.**

Cf Kathy Galloway in *Celebrating Women* p.100

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother...John 19:25



Pieta

A year ago you came
Early into the light.
You lived a day and night,
Then died; no-one to blame.

Once only, with one hand,
Your mother in farewell
Touched you. I cannot tell,
I cannot understand

A thing so dark and deep,
So physical a loss:
One touch, and that was all
She had of you to keep.
Clean wounds, but terrible,
Are those made with the Cross.

James McAuley: *Anthology of Australian Religious Poetry* p.154

Let us pray:

**May we know the slow mystery
in which mourning becomes solace,
turning us toward the kindness
that wants to meet us in our grief.**

**May comfort come to enfold us,
not to take away all sorrow
but to infuse it with tenderness,
with rest,
with every grace it has.**

*Cf Jan Richardson: *The Cure for Sorrow* p.168*



***And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,
they were all with one accord in one place.*** Acts 2:1



To Our Lady

Mother of all that is good,
of the light that is always touching the world
blessing all things,
the efficient system of each leaf,
the dark impasses of the lines of my hand,

you tell us
of the stone's astonishment
at its sudden warmth at the first beam of light,

of the horizons of dust
that cry to the clouds *Give us your fullness
and let us live.*

you take from us
the mounds of darkness we bury inside of us
and make from them a night of stars
where we can see your Son;

Our Lady,
withheld from death,
Mother of all things that must die,
speak for us,
do what we cannot do ourselves,
help us to hold in our hands the bird in flight,
to pull from our feet our heavy shadows,
to walk your way.

Kevin Hart: *Anthology of Australian Religious Poetry* p.152

**We worship you, Holy Spirit of God,
and we may only guess, as best we can,
who you are for us.
We open our hearts to receive you
that we may learn
how deeply and invisibly you are present everywhere.
You are the air we breathe,
the distance we gaze into,
the space that surrounds us.
You are the kindly light
in which we are attractive to each other.
You are the finger of God
with which God playfully ordered the universe.
You are the sensitive love with which God created us.**

**We pray to you,
Spirit of God, creator,
complete the work you have begun,
inspire us toward what is good –
to faithfulness and patience,
to compassion and gentleness,
and waken in us friendship for every living being
and with joy for all that is good.**

*Cf Huub Oosterhuis: *Your Word is Near* p.117*



***Our eyes search to see as you saw.
Our hearts yearn to know as you knew...
Be light for our darkness. Be dawn for our new day.***

Raphael Consedine pbvm: *Presentation – Mary of the Dawn*

This is what was bequeathed us:
This earth the beloved left
And, leaving,
Left to us.

No other world
But this one:
Willows and the river
And the factory
With its black smokestacks.

No other shore, only this bank
On which the living gather.

No meaning but what we find here.
No purpose but what we make.

That, and the beloved's clear instructions:
Turn me into song; sing me awake.

Gregory Orr: How Beautiful the Beloved

**May God, who comes to us in the things of this world,
bless our eyes and be in our seeing.
May Christ, who looks upon us with deepest love,
bless our hearts and enliven our loving.
May the Spirit, who perceives what is and what may yet be,
bless our minds and sharpen our understanding.
May the Sacred Three bless us all
and be our centre, our focus, our practice and our feast.**

Cf Jan Richardson: In the Sanctuary of Women pp.192, 199