

Do not be distant, O Lord, lest I find this burden
of loss too heavy, and shrink from the
necessary experience of my grief.

Do not be distant, O Lord, lest I become so
mired in yesterday's hurts, that I miss entirely
the living gifts this day might hold.

Let me neither ignore my pain, pretending all
is okay when it isn't, nor coddle and magnify
my pain, so that I dull my capacity to experience
all that remains good in this life.

For joy that denies sorrow is neither hard-won,
nor true, nor eternal. It is not real joy at all.
And sorrow that refuses to make space
for the return of joy and hope, in the end
becomes nothing more than a temple
for the worship of my own woundedness.

So give me strength, O God, to feel this grief
deeply, never to hide my heart from it. And give
me also hope enough to remain open to
surprising encounters with joy,
as one on a woodland path might stumble
suddenly into dapplings of golden light.

Amidst the pain that lades these days,
give me courage, O Lord; courage to live them
fully, to love and to allow myself to be loved,
to remember, grieve, and honor what was,
to live with thanksgiving in what is, and
to invest in the hope of what will be.

Be at work gilding these long heartbreaks
with the advent of new joys, good friendships,
true fellowships, unexpected delights. Remind
me again and again of your goodness, your
presence, your promises.

For this is who we are: a people
of The Promise—a people shaped
in the image of the God whose
very being generates all joy
in the universe, yet who also
weeps and grieves its brokenness.

LITURGY FOR
EMBRACING

Both Joy & Sorrow

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So we, your children, are also at liberty
to lament our losses, even as we
simultaneously rejoice in the hope
of their coming restoration.

Let me learn now, O Lord, to do this
as naturally as the inhale and exhale
of a single breath:

To breathe out sorrow,
to breathe in joy.

To breathe out lament,
to breathe in hope.

To breathe out pain,
to breathe in comfort.

To breathe out sorrow,
to breathe in joy.

In one hand I grasp the burden of my grief,
while with the other I reach
for the hope of grief's redemption.

And here, between the tension of the two,
between what was and what will be,
in the very *is* of now,
let my heart be surprised by, shaped by,
warmed by, remade by,
the same joy that forever wells within
and radiates from your heart, O God.

Amen.