

Children of the Living God,

Let us now speak of dying,
and let us speak without fear,
for we have already died with Christ,
and our lives are not our own.

Our dying is part of the story
that God is telling to us,
and part of the story
that God is telling *through* us.

It is not a dark and hopeless word
we must take pains to skirt or
mention only in hushed whispers lest
our conversations grow awkward
and uncomfortable.

Rather, death is a present and
unavoidable reality, and one
through which we—the people
of God—must learn to openly
walk with one another.

Yes, it is cause for lament. Death is
a horrible and inevitable sorrow.
It is grief. It is numb shock and
raw pain and long seasons of
weeping and ache. And we will
experience it as such.
But it is more than all of that.

For it is also a baptism,
a prelude to a celebration.

Our true belief that Christ died
and was raised again
promises this great hope:

AN EXHORTATION
MAKING SPACE

To Speak of Dying

EVERY MOMENT HOLY, VOL. II:

DEATH, GRIEF, & HOPE

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That there will be a newness of life,
a magnificent resurrection that
follows death and swallows it entirely.

Death will not have the final word,
so we need not fear to speak of it.

Death is not a period that ends a sentence.
It is but a comma,
a brief pause before the fuller thought
unfolds into eternal life.

Beloved of Christ, do not
hide from this truth: Each of
us in time must wrestle death.
In our youth we might have run
in fear from such lament, but only
those who soberly consider their
mortal end can then work backward
from their certain death, and so begin
to build a life invested in eternal things.
We should remember death throughout
our lives, that we might arrive at last
well-prepared to follow our Lord
into that valley, and through it,
further still, to our resurrection.

Death is not the end of life.
It is an intersection—a milestone
we pass in our eternal pursuit of Christ.

Yes, death is an inhuman, hungering thing.
But it is also the pompous antagonist in a
divine comedy. Even as it seeks to destroy
all that is good, death is proved a near-sighted
buffoon whose overreaching plans will fail,
whose ephemeral kingdom will crumble.

For all along, death has been blindly serving
the deeper purposes of God within us—

giving us the knowledge that
all we gather in this short life will soon
be scattered, that all we covet will soon
be lost to us, that all we accomplish by
our ambition will soon be rendered as
meaningless as vapor.

Death reveals the utter vanity of all our
misplaced worship and all our feebly-
invested hopes.

And once we've seen, in light of death,
how meaningless all our human strivings
have been, then we can finally apprehend
what the radical hope of a bodily resurrection
means for mortals like us—and how
the labors of Christ now reshape
and reinterpret every facet of our lives,
rebuilding the structures of our hopes
till we know that nothing of eternal worth
will ever be lost.

Yes, we are crucified with our Lord,
but all who are baptized into his death
are also resurrected into his life, so that
we live now in the overlap of the kingdoms
of temporal death and eternal life—

and when it is our time to die,
we die in that overlap as well,
and there we will find that our dying has
already been subverted, rewritten, folded in,
and made a part of our resurrection.

Have we not all along been
rehearsing Christ's death and
his life in the sacrament of his
communion? We have been both
remembering and rehearsing
our union and reunion with him.

O children of God, do you now see?
Your pursuit of Christ has always
demanded a daily dying to your own self,
and to your own dreams.

That final, brief sleep of death is but the last
laying down of all those lesser things, that
you might awake remade, set free, rejoicing
in the glorious freedom that will be yours.

Yes, hate death!

It is an enemy—
but an enemy whose end approaches, and
whose assault can inflict no lasting wound.

Yes, weep and grieve!

But more than that, believe!
The veil is thinner than we know.
And death is thinner still.
It cannot hold any whose names are
dearly known to God. Rejoice in this!
Death is neither a grey void, nor
a dungeon cell—but a door.
And when Christ bids us
pass through at last,
we pass from life to Life.

Amen.