



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...

Covid 19 – a horrible pandemic that caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and caused unutterable suffering, loneliness and upheaval of lives and fortunes – was not without its blessings. The isolation and silence offered to me, at least, an invitation to stop, look and listen. In the Spring of 2020, during early morning walks through my community, I noticed the beauty of nature and allowed it to speak to me. What began as taking pictures to prove to my daughters that I was getting out and walking, became a very spiritual experience. The following are some reflections on what I saw when I stopped and what I heard the Spirit saying to my listening soul.

I offer this to you as a gift. May it be a small blessing in your life.

JoLynn Ryan Krempecki

1.



I call You “Poppa God”, and I cry out to You from the deepest part of this heart You created – a heart where You want to dwell. I desire to know You, but although nearer to me than I am to myself, You are beyond my limited ability to reach. In Your omnipotence and might, in Your boundless love, in Your total resplendence, You elude me.

So, I ask Your creation to teach me of You – if only a little. I look at this rose: many parts, one flower; beauty that is defined in positive and negative space, in fragrance and color... and I learn of You. You are One, though you have many names – Father, Son, Spirit, Wisdom, Creator, Sanctifier, Redeemer, Friend, Strength... and my Poppa God.

Like the positive and negative spaces of the rose, You are in the positive and negative spaces of my life, of all history, of humanity and of the Church. The positive spaces – I remember sensing You in the birth of a child, in the gift of the Eucharist, in the wonder of crashing waves (with quite quiet joy), in little miracles.

And I know, too, that You have been my companion on the mourning bench. You held me as I struggled against the demons that possessed me for long stretches. You walked with me during my wandering from truth and from my truest self. You stayed when I “stiff-armed” You and Your laws and Your love.

I remember seeing You in the positive and negative spaces.

I have smelled Your fragrance in the lives of those who love You in goodness, simplicity, justice and humility. I have seen Your vibrant color in sunrises and sunsets, in fields of flowers, in clear and stormy skies, in reflecting waters.

Today, Poppa God, this lovely rose at my front door speaks to my heart of You. And for that I give thanks.

Pay attention to the present moment. What in your here and now is revealing Poppa God to you? What is it saying? If this is a new revelation, new knowledge, new intimacy – what is your response?

2.



When Scotch Broom blossoms, it is a gradual beginning. One or two yellow flowers appear amid a green background... then ten... then hundreds... until the riot of yellow takes over the entire bush. How brave and how conspicuous that first flower appeared, daring to be different, not knowing there would be others, yet compelled to raise its yellow voice and to BE! Courage is much harder to muster without a crowd.

My life for You, Jesus, takes courage to live. It's difficult to stand alone for justice, to pick up the pieces of a shredded credo, to carry on despite threat and fear, and in the midst of it to witness to why Mt. 25 compels me to stand with the "least brothers and sisters."

That witness helps make possible other blossoms – a shout of cadmium yellow into the world – a crowd of witnesses on the Scotch Broom, sweeping love and grace across a nation and a world currently littered with hate and violence. Grant us courage, Poppa God. Your Spirit is with us. Alleluia. Amen.

In your experience, has the Christian journey been lonely or full of fellow "blossoms"? Or both?

When you have needed courage to be prophetic, where did

you find it? What do you need from Poppa God at this point on your journey?

3.



My Jesus, You ascended through the clouds as You returned to the Father – a cloud encompassed You as You were transfigured and the Father’s voice came forth. What can I learn of the Father through the clouds? What do they tell me about my relationship with Poppa God?

Color, form, surprise, light and shadow... the beauty of clouds during sunrise and sunset, during an approaching storm, against a cerulean sky on a summer day – all speak of the Divine Artist, my Poppa God. Clouds glide over all the earth, over all people, like Divine Love which excludes no one.

They carry life-giving rain and sparkling snow. They move and morph and cast shadow in mysterious ways.

Lord, my God, we are taught that we see You in Your creation, and I now recognize You more clearly in the clouds. I see Your beauty and transcendence, Your power and Your gentleness. Meditating on Scripture I see Your connection with my Jesus, speaking His purpose and Your love for Him, enfolding Him and taking Him home to heaven, to Yourself ... in a cloud.

In the life of Your Son Jesus, as told in Scripture, I hear Your voice coming from the cloud “This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him.” As He ascended to heaven, again, a

cloud enfolded Him in Your embrace, bringing Him home to You, to His Abba, to Poppa God.

Clouds bring shadow – even the “bright cloud” of the Transfiguration. It brought the shadow of fear and awe to the apostles. But it also brought them a message and a directive... follow Jesus. What is pointing the way for you these days, telling you to follow Jesus more closely?

4.



“For although You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned You have revealed them to the childlike.”
Mt. 11:26

Children are adaptable. They fit in like water wherever they find themselves. They are comfortable in the world of imagination and play. They see possibilities in a puddle, worlds beyond the obvious.

Children are accepting. They know their vulnerability and powerlessness and are in touch with their true emotions.

Poppa God, help me reclaim the child within me, so I might discover You.

Powerlessness and vulnerability? In the ups and downs of life, teach me acceptance and holy indifference. Whatever power or authority I think I may have is illusion. In reality, I am totally vulnerable. You alone are strong, and whatever strength I have comes from You.

Emotions? Over the years, I’ve often distanced myself from my emotions as control seemed a vital part of adulthood. Jesus wept, was angry, felt joy. Jesus was childlike. I need to be more like Jesus.

May I grow backward into this authenticity. May I cry out in

hunger for greater union with You, Father. And may I find that union through Your Son. “No one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him.” Mt. 11:27. Soften my heart, open my mind.

On good days, I can imagine a childlike life that is still supple and playful. I can see myself climbing the big steps to the porch where You sit, Poppa God, in an old rocking chair. You beckon to me and I run to You. From my perch on Your lap I can see a puddle that reflects You and the world around it. I want so much to be a puddle – to reflect You in whose arms I rest. Help me to live imagination into reality.

Imagine yourself as a child – not the child you used to be, but the child you’re called to be right now. Where will that child go to meet Poppa God? What will that meeting be like?

5.



It is night for so many, Poppa God. I think today of one suffering with cancer and of his soul-darkness. He is deprived of all that once gave his life meaning and purpose. Daily his body betrays him, and this is baffling to him –especially given his relatively young age. He recently wrote, “Like St. Paul on the road to Damascus I am now plunged into darkness. I am stripped of any consolation when it comes to my sensory perceptions.” It is night.

I think of a new widow who yesterday buried her husband of 68 years. So often in the past I sat behind them at daily Mass. Each time they stood to pray, their hands found each other like the hands of young lovers. She has no hand to hold now. No matter the large number of family and friends at yesterday’s funeral, that widow stands alone and in a pain that feels like an amputation. It is night.

I think of a faithful disciple of Your Son Jesus who lives with a constant undercurrent of darkness. The restless and desperate search for meaning is always there. Flickering faith casts light into the deep abyss, but the shadows remain. It is night.

I think of a 97-year-old friend in a nursing home – blind, deaf, and due to Covid19, deprived of the comfort of family and friends for more than a year. Despite the “night” of her existence, she has remained constant in prayer and trust in you, in Jesus, in Mary Mother of God. She has embraced her vocation to be an intercessor for the world... and for herself. Jesus says, “Come to me all who are burdened.” She never forgets – even in her personal darkness.

Some who walk through the valley of tears can always pray, like my 97-year-old friend. For them it is simple and easy. Others can sometimes pray in the dark – though sporadic, the flame of prayer is still flickering in them. Still others can’t pray at all when the light seems to have gone out. The father of a dear friend confided to his son, “It’s so very hard to pray when you’re in pain.”

Jesus promised we will find rest in Him. He said He is the Way; He is the light. Poppa God, with my tiny arms I lift up to You all who struggle in the night and I make this prayer yoked to Your Son, going His Way and following His light. May all of us who so often stumble in the dark find rest.

Name all individuals and communities for whom it is night. Lift them up in prayer with YOUR tiny arms.

6.



Mt. 11:1-8

How quick I am to judge! The Pharisees were adept at it too. Seeing Jesus' disciples picking heads of grain and eating them on the Sabbath, they judged them guilty of doing work – and thus breaking the law. Jesus said the Pharisees had condemned innocent men because they didn't understand the deeper truths. Ah. The difference and danger of living on the surface.

It's easy to take a glance, make a judgement, do damage, and move blithely along. The simplest flowering bush exemplifies this. Plain white flowers on a sturdy trunk. That's it, right? But no. Look closer. It's clear that each blossom is individual, while it also is connected in community, growing out of a common center. Some blossoms are mature, some in bud, but all contribute to the bouquet of each cluster – like each of us in the Body of Christ.

And ARE they “white” flowers? Look again. Tones of pink and green, of greyed blue, but very little white. It's so easy to make judgements rather than to see differences and appreciate the beauty.

Study one single bloom. Each blossom has five petals, reminding me of the five wounds of Jesus, Your Son. Each has a golden crown at its center, reminding me of Christ the King. Each small flower is part of a larger unit, a cluster, which is part of a still large explosion of life and beauty, reminding me of my place and each person's place in Your eyes, Poppa God.

Father, teach me to see not just with my eyes, but with my heart and with my mind. Free my soul of judgement and fill it with wonder and love for Your creation and for my brothers and sisters in Christ. Bring me to a place beyond the obvious, where I will find truth, for that is where You live.

Find a living, growing thing (flower, branch, pinecone, etc.) and listen to what it tells you of Poppa God, of Jesus, of discipleship.

7.



Poppa God, gradually Your Son Jesus became aware there were people who wanted to kill Him. But His death was not theirs to decide, His life was not theirs to take. He hid Himself until it was the right time for Him to willingly and lovingly lay down His life. He was (is) committed to love and to Your timing – the right timing. Even in hiding He reached out to those needing healing and forgiveness when it was the right time. He embodies the “I-Thou” that You have with Him as He loves You and us with a faithful and powerful Agape.

It’s easy to be faithful to someone who is good. Yet, He is faithful to us in our brokenness and sin. It’s easy to love from a place of security, yet He poured out His powerful

heart when His life was being threatened – even when it was being taken.

A pair of cardinals outside my window speak to me of Jesus. Although in hiding, the male turns his gaze and his concern on his mate. It’s said that cardinals mate for life. So, too, Jesus has committed to us... but not for earthly life alone – Rather, for eternal life.

Poppa God, Creator of all, I offer You praise and gratitude for the love You show through Your Son. And I thank You for these beautiful birds that remind me of it.

Recall the greatest earthly love you’ve ever known. From that remembrance, try to imagine the Agape of the Father for you.

8.



Poppa, in Mt. 12:38 we read that Jesus calls His contemporaries an “evil and unfaithful generation” – evil for their deeds and for not recognizing Him and unfaithful for wanting You on their own terms. They demanded signs and wonders.

How evil our own generation is – so much so that sometimes it overwhelms me! The black clouds of selfishness and pride, of hate and division, and of apathy that shut You out hang over me and frighten me. It’s easy to become absorbed into the darkness, even to contribute to it. It’s easy to become afraid, complicit and lost.

Out of Your limitless love, You sent Your Son to “unlost” me and to guide me through the black cloud and home to You. He is my Light. May I recognize Him this day in His many disguises. Truly He is greater than Solomon, greater than Jonah, greater than my fears, greater than all. Greater than all except You, Poppa God.

What black clouds are on your horizon today?

Pray for the grace to walk through the dark following the Light that is Jesus.

9.



You, Poppa God, are the sturdy trunk of all existence. You are the Force binding all creation together. You are the strength and rootedness that give birth to branches of all sizes – branches that point in many directions, reach upward and outward, depending always on their link to You. They remain joined to You and carry Your sap and nutrients to new life. They extend your presence into the world.

I am a twig on just such a branch. The Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, a branch on the limb of Vincent and Louise, provided for my growing many years ago. For 160 years this branch has remained strongly connected to You and to service in Jesus' name. They embody the Charism of Charity – the seed from which they sprang. I pray for them as they sustain their tradition while venturing into new works and new ways of being. I am grateful that long ago they connected me to You and continue to do so.

As a small twig, I am close to the buds of the fragrant flowers and the new green leaves of this holy branch. I beg You, Poppa God, give me grace to burst forth in good fruit according to Your will. And may the Sisters of Charity be rewarded for their labors.

Think of one of the branches from which you have grown. What has that branch given you? Is it still providing nutrients for you? Or do you need the Gardener to come and graft you onto another one?

10.



Poppa God, today You sent a message through geese. I don't know by what arrangement, but it seems each goose takes a turn leading the flock through water or sky. Perhaps one is selected at random by the others... but I think not. More likely one sees the way clearer, or feels stronger and more confident, and, so, moves to the front to serve the others.

That happens with people, too.

I think of Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus. She had not been a leader, but simply a lover following her Lord, one of His flock. She gathered healing strength and hope from Him. Finally, discovering the empty tomb, she felt His power when He called her name. He reached out to her

in her brokenness, returning Love for love, Faithfulness for faithfulness. In that moment, Rabbouni gave Mary Magdalene what she needed to lead. He called her forward and upward, giving her a mission to be Church and to proclaim the Good News.

Poppa God, when I am low, Jesus reaches out to me to steady my heart and fire up my soul. He helps me see what good is inside me by calling my name. He stands me on my feet and, through grace, chooses me to lead... perhaps only for a little while... or to lead just a small flock. I pray I swim well and fly high on the strength of my Rabbouni.

What does the V formation of geese tell you? How does it inform your faith or your spiritual journey?

11.



An infinite sky – silently holding stars, planets, clouds and comets – stretches overhead. It's beyond my limited scope to grasp – even in a small way. But I can see, and do see, a tree that I can feel and that is near. I can walk up to this tree and touch it. I can hear the drumbeat of a woodpecker tapping out a meal from the tree's sturdy trunk. And so, it should be.

In my littleness and limited being I can only see and hear the here and now.

Poppa God, You are more than that universe I cannot comprehend. You are a deeper silence than farthest space and bigger than a bigness without limits.

Yet, I long for You. My heart is restless for You. I

pray for the grace to have each moment reflect You and draw me to You. I pray that it this world does not obscure You like trees that can obscure the sky, but that I find You in what is near. I pray to hear ever more clearly the Word You spoke – and continue to speak – in the silence of Loving us. May I have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Spend time in the vastness of the universe. Be still and know God is.

12.



I notice that reflections are clearer, truer, most substantial the closer they are to their source. Distance from reality dilutes the form and color of a reflection in the water. Disturbances, ripples, too, break through shapes and cause distortion.

So it is, as well, in my relationship with You, Poppa God.

You sent Your Son to be a sturdy tree in our midst. By reflecting Him whom we can see, we reflect You who are hidden.

Sadly, I regularly drift away from the bank that is Jesus and no longer reflect Him well. Despite Word and Sacrament, my mind and heart grow distant and my spirit becomes little more than

disjointed color on the surface of the water.

Sometimes life's ripples threaten to distort my soul and my relationship with Jesus. Poppa God, today I pray for the graces of fervor and perseverance in my love affair with Your Son. I pray to more faithfully know You, love You and serve You in this world – as He did – so as to be with You forever. Amen.

Looking at reflections, what do you see?

13.



your hand in Your garden and ponder.

Pondering takes time and focus. Spend time today taking time and finding focus.

In the Gospel according to Matthew we read many parables told by Jesus. These are story-lessons that take the ordinary stuff of life, look at it closely – perhaps in a unique way – and demonstrate a deeper reality. A parable is a kind of “ponder” that is beyond looking.

The Kingdom of God is like yeast, like a pearl, like a sower who sows good seed. A Master teacher uses stories from life to illustrate and to facilitate a deep dive beyond the surface of life and into the heart of the spirit.

Poppa God, as I go through this day, remind me to see in a new way and to ponder.

May the stamens in the heart of a tulip bring me to contemplate the hands and feet of Jesus – nailed to the Cross of Love for me.

May the leaves of the tulip– each in its uniqueness – bring me to appreciate my brothers and sisters in Christ with their wonderful differences and varied gifts.

May the cup shape of the tulip remind me of my destiny – to drink of the cup He drank.

Listening to the parable of the tulip today, Poppa God, I hold

14.



In the Scripture I learn that You call me, Poppa. You call me to Yourself and to happiness and wholeness.

Certainly, You've beckoned to me throughout my entire existence. But now, at this point on my life's journey, I hear You more clearly. Perhaps that's because I am closer to the end and to the place where You dwell. What was a long and circuitous road in my youth now seems only a short way, and the destination is in sight.

The Scripture reminds me of Your call to head for home.

A second message from Scripture is to trust in You and in Jesus as I continue on the way. Save me, Lord... from pebbles in

my shoe that slow me down, from ruts in the road that threaten to turn my ankle, from distraction that threatens to have me lose my way. You are not only the Goal, but also the Way to the Goal.

A third message is service – to seed the roadside with Agape love. May I see how to heal others (in small ways) and may I have the grace to reach out with whatever loaves and fishes I carry, giving them to You and stepping away. May I not only see my brothers and sisters starving for justice, but also feed them myself. Agape truly makes “all the way to heaven” become heaven. May I do Your will on earth through Agape, which is Poppa God kind of love.

Where are you on your life journey right now? Experiencing any pebbles in your shoe, ruts in the road, detours that take you from your destination? What is your prayer as you continue to travel toward home?

15.



A solitary bird in a tree can speak of loneliness, uniqueness, particular gifts, isolation, monochromatic sadness, hopeful waiting or steadfast watching. The message depends on the eyes that see.

Poppa God, I am reminded of the importance of keeping the eyes of the heart and soul open and seeing 20/20. As I go through this day, help me to choose to see hope, light and life. Remind me to appreciate the unique place and vision You have given me. Strengthen me to use my particular gifts for Your Kingdom and for Your glory.

May I be lonely this day only for You... longing for You... looking for You.

May my song praise You and may it reach others in their blessed singularity.

May I find a way – even in solitude – to use what You have given me to spread hope, light and life – especially to those whose hearts are heavy and in pain.

How's your heart/soul vision these days? Why do you think so?

16.



Today I'm looking at the shadows in my life, the darkneses that stretch across the landscape of my soul, casting so much into obscurity.

I think of yesterday when I spoke about another's "faults", casting what I saw as her pride and self-importance into the spotlight for all to see. Not only did I wrong her, but I also wronged the listener of my tale, affected by the shadow cast by my sin.

O Poppa God, will I never learn? Will I ever be free of my own pride that tries to build up my ego by tearing others down?

I say I believe we are all Your beloved children. How can I continue to harm my brothers and sisters with the vicious weapon of my tongue?

Shadows are dispelled by light. Poppa God, You sent Jesus to be our Light. Forgive me the darkness I bring into the world. Help me to start again.

It's hard to look at the shadows our sins cast into the world and on other people. Are you ready to look at yours? What do you see? What is your prayer?

17.



Sometimes it's hard to tell what I'm seeing. What is reality? What is of You, Father? What is not? What is only ripples on the surface of my consciousness? What is the good that the Spirit is doing in my soul?

During times when the surface of the water of life is swaying and I can't make things out, Poppa God, I look to Jesus to learn how to see.

In the Garden of Gethsemane He too seems to be in the midst of a similar quandary. What did He do?

On His knees, He went to You, focused His heart on You, and struggled as He submitted His will to Yours. That part, about the struggle, is a huge challenge. It's so tempting to climb out of the deep and dark hole and to try to go it alone – without You.

But alone doesn't seem to be part of Jesus' way. Not only did He stay with You in the struggle of His life, but He also brought friends along. As it turns out, not really dependable friends, but those He loved, and who – in their own broken way – had supported Him in the past.

Poppa, when it's hard for me to see, I pray that, like Jesus, I stay close to You and I pray for the grace to remember that alone isn't a good option. I pray for humility to seek the companionship of compassionate friends.

May the Spirit give me total trust in You and in Your Love.

Are you having clarity of soul vision these days? Or in a bit of a muddle? If in a muddle, have you been tempted to avoid the struggle? How are you dealing with it? What's your plan?



I've learned a new and useful word.

Coddiwomble means "to travel in a purposeful manner towards an as-yet-unknown destination." That's it. That's the perfect word to describe my pilgrim journey on the winding road of this life towards heaven.

Poppa, Your Son showed me the Way, baptism put me on the road, and You continually cast Your light on my path through Your Word and the Spirit. So, I travel with purpose and determination.

I am totally dependent upon the strength You give me and the nourishment of the Body and Blood of Jesus. The meandering road of my life cannot be met with meandering steps.

I pilgrim on. Time is short.

Yet, the destination? I cannot truly know it. Jesus says often, "The Kingdom of heaven is like..." a pearl, wheat saved from the weeds, a wedding feast... and on and on. Yet, I still cannot see heaven, for a state of being cannot be seen, and the ultimate fulfillment and bliss cannot be imagined. Still, it's imperative that I continue along the Way with determination and trust.

Grant Your mercy when I stray or stumble or lose focus or stop (all of which I do).

Grant me strength to coddiwomble in hope until the last bend in the road reveals the heaven Jesus was trying to paint for us – that indescribable destination as-yet-unknown.

One who has a "why" to live for can bear almost any "how". – Nietzsche

Coddiwomble on...