



Grateful, Grateful
a community poem

Grateful, grateful for nature—
Beautiful sunrises. Skies that tell the mysterious
Story of weather. Gray clouds layered like skeins of wool.
Rain, fog and wind while listening to Buddhist chants.
Maple trees outside the window. Colors of fall—
muted, understated, quiet, wonderful as friendships.

Grateful, grateful for life
In a city with little pollution. A roof
Over our heads and a bed to sleep in. The power
Coming back on this morning. The rooms
In our house, warm in winter, cool in summer.
A fridge full of food, garden produce in the basement.
Home is more than a place to sleep and eat. Home
Is a place to share, sanctuary, aroma of bread in the oven,
Cold, cold milk and cookies to dunk, joy
Of crocheting, smiling faces offering tight hugs,
Hot cups of delicious tea, candle lit rooms and snuggling
Blankets, coffee ice cream with chocolate chips,
Repository of good energy. When we move
A lovely family buys our home, will love it
As much as we have. Another home awaits.

Grateful, grateful for acceptance in the family of our birth—
Siblings who lift each other up. Parents who give us the best
Of themselves, spare us from violence, protect us well,
Teach us how to take care of ourselves. We move closer
To them in their elder years, to cherish them while they're here.

Grateful, grateful for waking up next to someone
We love. That familiar hand in ours. That dear
Funny, brilliant, creative, handsome someone
Who loves us, and gets us, flaws and all. Who
Cooks us delicious nourishing food, cleans up
The leaves, and shows us how to be patient and kind.

Grateful, grateful for our children. The men and women
Our grown children love. Our grandchildren—their text
Messages, expressions of caring. Grateful, grateful
For family picnics and holiday celebrations, reunions
With precious ones in faraway homes.



Grateful, grateful for flu shots. Successful cataract surgery.
Successful cancer surgery. Short drives to doctors
And hospitals. Good insurance. The means to pay
For medical care. Every day of good health (take
No day for granted). The willingness to explore
All aspects of aging, no matter how hard,
To enter eldering with awareness. “Old
Is just another word for nothing left to lose.”*

Grateful, grateful for letting go of one life
And embracing the new. Getting a second chance.
Getting to go to grad school. Getting to do
Work we love. Getting to realize
A dream—new house, road trip, learning
Hospitality from the people of other nations.

Grateful, grateful for community. Guitars
That make us sing. Art. Theater. Children’s faces
Sparkling with cold cheeks, full smiles. Dogs.
Feral cats we care for (some of whom let us
Pet them). Congregations of faith in love
Of God. Children dressed up as saints. The post
Office, hand-written postcards and letters sent all
Over the world, adding pleasure to this life, that life.
The farmer’s market where we buy produce and meat
From hardworking locals who must have two jobs
To survive. Sister- and brother-friends who help us
Grow, angels who stay with us through the humbling
Times, getting us groceries, taking our dog to the vet
And us out for dinner. They make us feel not alone.

Grateful, grateful for the tribe of writers.
Mindfulness poems that get us going again.
Booksellers. Public libraries. A stack of new
Books, whole worlds awaiting. Sustenance.
The spiritual practice of exploring where
Words will take us. Morning coffee and blank
Pages in notebooks, pencils, knowing how
To type with all fingers, writing with
Others, blooming from within.

Grateful, grateful for the interpreter who translates
Amharic for the Ethiopian patient who speaks no English.
We want the patient to know he matters. We want him
To believe he can come to believe in himself—again
Or for the first time. We want him to trust
There’s at least one other person who believes
In him as someone with good qualities and sound
Gifts. We want him to know we’re all bound
Together in kinship by our imperfections and impermanence.

Grateful, grateful for the *Shomrei Or*,
“Defenders and preservers of light” who give themselves
To the service of justice, generosity, freedom and love,

* Quoting Parker Palmer





Who work to make this country more compassionate,
Who help us release restrictions for empowerment,
Who teach us how to die consciously and lovingly.

Grateful, grateful:
We have known love in our life.
We know how to give love.
We have experienced awe.
We're blessed with power to create our future.
We know we're not victims.
We know in our bones that suffering is optional
(And remember this most of the time).
We have the ability to hear and help others,
To be proximate to those who are powerless,
Confused, frightened, desperate, yet
Resilient. We have voices. We have opportunities
To learn the difference between "respond"
And "react," the value and wisdom of silence.
We accept the spiritual practice
Of placing these gifts in perspective
And working to share their benefits
With those who have simply been less lucky.

Grateful, grateful for the *power-off* button
On the remote. For the simple awakenings of meditation.
For the courage to write a final letter to a dying friend,
The energy to risk vulnerability, the bravery
To sit quietly with deep discomfort, belief
In what sometimes goes unseen, trust
In the heart's guidance, the home altar
Holding prayers for others.

Grateful, grateful for love's
Disguises yet to be found—
Morning birdsongs
Gentle breeze
Laughter
Bees
Invitations to reflect on gratitude
To express it
Breaths we have left to take
You

That's plenty for this morning

Phyllis Cole-Dai created this community poem in November 2019 from brief "gratitude lists" offered by some of her newsletter readers (names as submitted): Lois Andersen, Katharina Bossman, Nuala Carpenter, Carol Cole, Ann Comeau, Sandra Conant, Linda Gallalee, Geri, Annette Grunseth, Jane Heitman Healy, Ronnie Hess, Carol Beth Icard, Bob Lipetz, Meg, Marianne Murphy Zarzana, Dianne Nagy, Meredith Neria, Larry Ort, Robert Reed, Michael Rosen, Peg Runnels, Larry Smith, Jack Schwarz, and Laura Grace Weldon. She wishes to thank them and her entire circle of readers.

If you would like to join Phyllis's circle of readers, click [here](#) or type <https://bit.ly/2CT1QfZ> into your browser window. She'll send a free sampler of her work when you sign up.