

On My 58th Birthday: 58 Pandemic Prayers

Phyllis Cole-Dai

May we all survive to another birthday.
May we greet the sun each morning and rejoice in being alive.
May we breathe the miracle of fresh air.
May we honor every moment as a chance to begin anew.
May we root our faith in richer soil than worry.
May we let separation knit us close.
May we see faces besides our own in the mirror.
May we recognize all people as kin.
May we cherish them as much as ourselves.
May we stay home to keep them safe.
May we nurture the body that houses our soul.
May we have adequate shelter, food, water, medicine, and rest.
May we share freely from our abundance.
May we resist the temptation to hoard.
May we ask for help without hesitation or shame.
May we draw comfort from the company of animals, flowers, and trees.
May we befriend the sounds of silence.
May we welcome the intimacies of solitude.
May we dive to the depths of our being and bring up blessings we didn't know we had.
May we be sanctuary for one another.
May we refuse to dwell in the blindness of denial, indifference, or contempt.
May we tame our temper and carry no grudge.
May we empathize even with those we dislike.
May we gift one another with radical attention.
May we listen to one another as if lives depend on it.
May we speak as if our voice will be the last sound ever heard.
May we explore how to touch without touching, how to hold without holding.
May we not be embarrassed by tears and trembling.
May we learn from our children the joy of unstructured time and the solace of routines.
May we reassure our children about the monsters beneath their beds.
May we create new rituals of togetherness.
May we laugh from our bellies.
May we cultivate wonder.
May we help our society to do better than it has done.
May we examine problems from all angles and talk straight as lines.
May we base decisions on collective wisdom rather than contagious fear.
May we invest our trust in those who are experts, not those who pretend.
May we value health over wealth.
May we dedicate our daily work both to those we love and to the common good.

May we sustain those workers whose invisible labor sustains us all.
May we protect those who put themselves at risk to protect us.
May we transform the impossible into the doable.
May we inquire into the welfare of strangers.
May we stand up for those who are scapegoated and targeted by hate.
May we sing porch to porch until all the world is our neighbor.
May we drop expectations of how hard or long this road will be.
May we pace ourselves as we go.
May we each shoulder more of the load so that nobody stumbles beneath it.
May we prepare ourselves for the unknown.
May we follow the light of our brightest prayers.
May we live together into better versions of ourselves.
May we plant the seeds of a new world in what remains of the old one.
May we remember in the dark hours that we're not alone.
May we let no one die forsaken, in pain, or untouched by kindness.
May we grieve the lost, though we cannot gather.
May we do right by their memory.
May we not waste a minute of the precious time they should have had.
May we love one another as we would be loved.
May our children survive us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phyllis Cole-Dai', written in a cursive style.

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