

# Prayers Under Sail

By Tad Dunne

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# Preface

God graces us with the ability to know what to do  
when navigating troubled waters

Fifty-two prayers that rise in our hearts  
when the winds are blowing us off course.

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# Hearts on Fire

Father, we beg:

Come Spirit, Come Christ—

Deeper,

wider,

higher.

Set our hearts on fire

with your desire.

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# Naked Tree

I am a leaf-lost tree  
standing in snow  
branching boughs  
and lacey tendrils  
into the still gray air.

Silenced.

A sentinel waiting  
in still anticipation  
for the grace of  
warm butterscotch sap  
and Granny-Smith-hued buds.

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## A Star Afar

Awe over a star afar  
so far from earthly scrambles to stay alive.

Yet every star like Sun  
thunders in silent explosions  
hurtling light to hearts  
on earthy grounds  
going round.

All is not night.

Einstein was right:  
Gravity directs Light.

— Ps 147:4

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# **Patient Love**

Come Patient Love:

Spectacularity

has usurped your throne

in my heart.

# Awe

In awe that I am, I praise you.

Wondrous are your acts, and my being deeply knows it.

— *Ps 139:14*

I was mercifully treated  
so that Christ Jesus might display  
his inexhaustible patience  
as an example.

— *1 Tim 1:15*

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# Soul Music

So here we are,  
your people gathered,  
letting music resonate our desires for harmony—

not of a single chord  
but of the swells and tangles,  
the discords and groping,  
the suspenses and surprises,  
the savoring of sweetness,

the finale.

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# God Given Love

God, give me your love.

Oh, I know you love me.

What I want

is your love in me

for my neighbor.

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# Fear of Love

I fear you will want

to love through me

in ways I fear

—especially in my dotage.

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# God's Reign

Come Christ.

Come Spirit.

Let the light of your desire  
for God's Reign of Love  
cast all my worries into shadow.

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# God's Glory

The subjective correlative of God's glory is human awe.

The glory of God is humans fully alive

*Tertullian*

We are fully alive when we live

making love,

making beauty,

making community.

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## Day prayer

I read. I think.

I open my hands.

I say, "So?"

I wait.

Again,

"So?"

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# Knocking

I've been knocking:

Draw me to your Son.

Show me my errant, aimless detours

Must I shout and pound the door?

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# Our Father

Our Father, ...

give us today your eyes to see our world,

your confidence that all shall be well,

and your love with which to love.

Give us too our daily bread.

Spirit of Christ,

when I awake in morning's wee hours,

fill me with your peace.

Deliver me from the Satan

who agitates me with thoughts

that there are things up to me alone

to accomplish today.

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# Psalms of Praise

Nowadays,  
in what we call the higher churches,  
believers can calmly recite or sing  
or read a psalm of praise  
from obligation  
without a shiver of uncontainable awe.

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# Thy Kingdom Come

Today, it is not what I get done  
but how I let God's Kingdom come  
wherever I am.

I may get nothing done.

— *Lk 11:20*

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# Not My Own

You gave me all I have  
or call my own.

Even I am not my own.

I am owned,  
bought and paid for at the dearest price.

— 1 Cor 6:19

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## Not the End

What Paul received through a revelation of Jesus Christ:

Jesus accepted death,  
the symbol since Eden  
of our alienation from God.

— *Gal 1:12*

He was raised from the dead,  
as first fruits of God's redemption.

Our alienation from God,  
in which death is the end of us, was destroyed.

All can now be made fully alive in Christ.

He then hands over the kingdom to God the Father.

— *1 Cor 15:20-28*

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## Jesus' Happiness

Only the Father knows you, Jesus.

And the Father is known only by you  
and by those to whom you reveal him.

So bless us with the eyes and ears of the simple,  
and with your happiness  
that our names are enrolled in heaven  
where you are.

— *Lk 10: 21-14.*

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## Fix my Eyes

Kind-kin God,  
I get fixed on tasks and deadlines.

Fix my eyes on how everyone  
is trying to be their best,  
and cannot do it without  
welcoming your love

. . . even perhaps,  
with my help today?

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# Getting Older

Letting go of dead hopes  
and diminishing opportunities.

Why upset at the slow losses of old age?

Did I forget  
that nothing worthwhile will be lost?

— *Colin Maloney*

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## Doing Today

Already dying. Each day.

You move me to be responsible,  
while I just let the chips fall where they may.

I cannot do this day  
without your graces  
your desires  
and your love.

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# Tiresome Lover

You are a tiresome lover.

You wear me out.

Or

you wear out the solitary me

in the life you desire to share with me.

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## **The Body of Christ**

The Body of Christ has many members.

Doctrines are the bones, dramas the flesh,  
and each of the 50 billion neurons  
in a single body receives and gives  
electrical charges of love.

To be in love with God  
is to be in love  
with all that God loves:

Every leaf. Every face.

Every love-neuron  
in the Body of Christ.

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# The Story of My Life

How naturally I imagine the story of my life.

As if my story will one day be told  
and I will be remembered in the story  
I tell only myself.

But people will tell a different story,  
one that highlights what I would lowlight  
and leaves my really favorite parts in shadow.

But there is only one true story,  
in which I am but a word

—maybe a sentence?—

in your Big Book of Love.

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# Jesus Remembers

As my memories  
make my past present to me,  
so your love and total self-giving in Palestine  
are present to you  
now and always.

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# Imagining Jesus

Jesus, how shall I imagine you?

You are sharing your life

with all those you love as the Father loves you,

those you have taken to yourself

so that where you are they may be too,

those for whom you prepared a seat at the banquet,

those whose joy is now complete

because you give them your own joy.

— *Jn 14-15.*

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# Unending Word

Ah. This.

This my life,  
not mine.

This passing grunt within your unending, total Word.  
So rich in memories of what I cannot possess, not mine.

Everybody in the world is alike, their this,

Always yours, your Word, our Christ.

Speak on, kind God.

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# Worries

You and the days and death:

My worries are not just mine.

They are my part in the groping  
and groaning of the creating and healing  
of your Spirit in the body of your Son.

So, in the time I call mine,  
give me your eyes to see what you see,  
your trust in the life of each day,  
and the fire of your love in my heart  
to love with you wherever I am.

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# Left Undone

Things I must get done  
I will leave undone the day I die,  
Leaving them to the ones I love.

Thy Kingdom come.

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# God is So Quiet

You are so quiet.

This too is a share in your life!

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## Mortally Restless

You could have made us any way you wanted.

Oh! . . .

You wanted to share your innermost self.

So you made us mortal and restless,  
yet hopeful and creative lovers,

here and now alive  
in your everywhere and timeless  
life of loving.

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## Faith, Charity, Hope

God: I need your eyes and heart and hands!

I need faith to see the truly better,

a heart of charity to love,

and the hands of hope to hang on

no matter how rough the road.

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# The Ultimate Mystery

Love is the ultimate mystery.

What we know is that love creates everything.

Love gives itself to creation:

on planet Earth in Jesus and his followers  
as well as in every thralled heart.

Love is the possibility of everything.

We know this

because love has revealed  
that nothing more is possible  
than what these self-gifts can bring.

What we don't know is

what graced, self-transcending lives  
on other planets know.

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## Now I am

I was not and now I am.

Now I am and will not be

just what I am now. I am yours. And with your love  
you flood all hearts to be  
your love-gift to your Son.

Now to be a me in a we,

One in love, your glory here,

Christ's own joy complete.

— *Jn 17:6*

Feeling quite disappointed

by the meager fruits of my words;

yet just so do you come and live in me,

a living yen, a longing for your reign.

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# Lifelong Lovers

We were not.

And now we are.

Now we are

and will not be

just what we are now.

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## Strange Lover

So. You come as best you can.

And I live as best I can  
by surrendering to love and  
by following Jesus, as so many do.

True, I hope to see you in the flesh,  
But you have already come in the flesh.

True, I hope to experience being fully in love with you,  
But I experience this every day:

Being a "we" with you:  
    every dish washed,  
    every weed pulled  
    every gas tank filled  
    every junk mail junked  
    every flower planted  
    every room dusted

You really are "the strangest of all lovers".

*(Inspired by "God is a Strange Lover" by Jessica Powers).*

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## Patient Power

God extends to us his own power.

But to notice it, one should notice Jesus.

His power is a patient power. It forgives. It bears the pain and sorrows of others. It calls but does not coerce.

His is the power of true creation, a power that groans in all creation and in all creatures hoping to be liberated from futility.

His is the power that longs like a hen for her chicks.  
A power at its best in weakness

— 2 Cor 12:9.

Whatever it is I desire in all my desiring, you will give.

And I so desire to embrace in a final way all your love as well as every good thing and every good person I carry in my heart.

But, kind God, save me from the despair of being entirely unable to imagine all this happening in the next 20 years or so and evermore after.

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## Tiny Planet

What do you mean by making our world such a tiny and isolated place in the universe of this creation?

Is it simply that your self-gift is most effective when we die as individuals, as families, as communities, as a race?

Here we thought that ongoing life would be the best life.  
Here we thought it not good that we die.

Here I thought it not good that future is but an analogy for our hope, which cannot essentially rest in later.

So, here, I yield all those I sorely miss, those dead and gone, as well as those alive and away.

Lost to me. And I to them.

All shall be well. And all manner of thing shall be well.

Here I give myself to a love  
that does not reserve another place, another time,  
to be full.

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## Seasons of Hope

While hopes regard after, hope regards seasons:

the spring of flowering,  
the summer of flourishing,  
the fall of faltering,  
the winter of fasting.

Hope stands in the faith that nothing worthwhile  
shall be lost, and all shall be well  
because such is life in God.

But "rage, rage, against the dying of the light"?

No need, Dylan.

It will be taken from you.

And for your sake.

Because a new light will dawn.

*Inspired by Northrup Frye, "Anatomy of Criticism."*

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## Against the Dark

The task of life is not to stay breathing.  
Not to rage, rage against the dying of the light.

It's to stay wholesome.

To rage,

Not against the end of our lives on earth  
but rage against any darkness that would

cloud our intelligence,  
overshadow truth,  
and blind us to good, self-giving care.

To gratefully and joyfully let our creator  
lead our lives through love.

"Consider yourselves dead to sin and  
living to God in Christ Jesus. "

— *Rom 6:11*

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## Up?

Heaven neither up nor after.

Easy to live with not up.

We live on a ball,  
after all.

But hard to live with not after.

The same planetary image  
is in a universe going from then to now to later.

Still, "up" is a powerful image, given the psychology of  
the subconscious.

Up is better. Down is worse.

After too is better and before is worse  
for much the same image of ourselves always striving,  
being the self-completing animals that we are.

Ah, ah, ... the self-surrender even of hopes for after!

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## Double Gift

I believe that God created the world to be a family of peace, and that God gives his own self to the world.

I believe God does this doubly.

In Jesus of Nazareth God comes into human history, showing us in the flesh what he desires, how he acts, inviting all to become part of this historical community of love, and being the historical founder of that community.

In the Holy Spirit God offers himself as love to all human hearts, a spirit by which we can see how the world truly stands, a spirit on which we rely to persevere through troubles, a spirit that energizes us to actively love others as we love ourselves.

I long for the day when God's reign is as complete on earth as it is in heaven.

So does Jesus.

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# I Will Come

"The Spirit of Truth will be in you.

I will come to you.

You will see me.

You will realize that I am in my Father,  
and you are in me, and I in you.

I will love you and reveal myself to you."

— *Jn 14*

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# Upstairs Thumping

Come, Spirit of Love,  
focus my love on your movings  
about in my heart  
—like I do with Dorth's  
thumping about upstairs.

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## Why the Snakes?

What is it you are giving me when I feel bereft of you?

What is it you are giving your Kingdom  
by letting the snakes thrive?

Contemplation includes  
not only a welcome of what is  
but also a baffling, frustrating lament  
over what shouldn't be.

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## Mulching

On a November maple  
like uncountable others  
a few leaves wobble  
in the wintercoming wind,  
each a miracle  
soon to disconnect, descend,  
lie in the soil from which it sprung  
perhaps to mulch another maple yet.

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## Beauty and Depravity

How can we so long for beauty,  
order, and peace  
while hoarding our gains,  
assembling weapons,  
walling out the poor and the strange?

Why must the progress of our universe  
entail violence, depravity, and loss?

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# Doing & Letting

*Non semper facere*

*sed fiat mihi.*

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# Adult Learning

Things adults learn:

It is remarkably easy to get into trouble.

There are things people don't have to know.

The surface of things is as important as what's beneath.

It's far easier to start evil than to stop it.

To destroy evil without destroying good we have to confront it in ourselves.

Labels are simple-minded substitutes for understanding.

Everybody needs to be forgiven.

Under every tombstone lie uncountable regrets.

Lies are not the enemies of truth. Myths are. (JFK)

Two lessons of love:

If you love you will hurt

If you love you will hurt.

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## Holy and Priceless

How can you allow such horrors?

I get it that you share with us  
your own freedom, creativity,  
self-determination, and the yen to love.

But what do you have in mind  
about leaving the care of children to us?

Is the possibility of the Holy Family  
worth the price of one battered infant?

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## God's Will

How neglectable the Sphinx-stern term,  
"the will of God."

How compelling the truth:  
that God,  
who made each of us,

lovingly,  
persistently,  
urgently,  
silently,

desires.

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# Privates

These down there urges  
hidden by discretion  
are by nature social,  
the very runnels of history,  
  
and for the sake  
of so much more than just us.

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# Returning to God

We must become holy together.

After all,  
what might God say  
if one of us  
returns without the other?

*Charles Peguy*

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# Loved Ones Lost

Who does not hope to be rejoined  
with loved ones lost?

Kind God, rejoin us at your banquet!

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# Lying

Lying is not only a sin against truth.

It is also a defense against love.

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# Resenting God

The truth:

I more resent your callous disregard  
for history's billions savage born  
and savagely dumped  
than the delicate ways you abandon me.

If You, who can do all things,  
give yourself to us as far as possible,  
then the reason for human suffering and misery  
is that some things

You, Love,  
will not do . . . by yourself.

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# Small Graces

Grateful for things  
I didn't say today,  
but damn close.

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