

Prayer at the Burial of the Dead at Sea

“We therefore commit his body to the deep, looking for the general Resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose second coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the sea shall give up her dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like unto his glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”

[Note: The tradition of burial at sea is an ancient one. As far as anyone knows this has been a practice as long as people have gone to sea. In earlier times, the body was sewn into a weighted shroud, usually sailcloth. The body was then sent over the side, usually with an appropriate religious ceremony. Many burials at sea took place as recently as World War II when naval forces operated at sea for weeks, and months at a time. Since World War II many U.S. service members, veterans, and family members have chosen to be buried at sea.]

The prayer above was likely used by both British and U.S. ships in the 1800's

Catholic Prayer

Lord God,
by the power of your Word
you stilled the chaos of the primeval seas,
you made the raging waters of the Flood subside,
and calmed the storm on the sea of Galilee.
As we commit the body (earthly remains)
of our brother (sister) to the deep,
grant him/her peace and tranquility
until that day when he/she
and all who believe in you
will be raised to the glory of new life
promised in the waters of baptism.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

Other Words of Comfort

“I give you this one thought to keep,
I am with you still, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glint on the snow.
I am as sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain when you awaken in morning hush.
I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight,
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not think of me as gone,
I am with you still in each new dawn.”

Annon.

The tide recedes but leaves behind bright
seashells on the sand.

The sun goes down but gentle warmth still
lingers on the land.

The music stops, and yet it echoes on in sweet
refrains...

For every joy that passes, something beautiful
remains.

-- M. D. Hughes

Crossing the Bar

Sunset And Evening Star
And One Clear Call for Me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
when I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep
too full for sound and foam.
When that which drew from out the
boundless deep
turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
and after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
when I embark;

For though from out our bourne of time
and place
the flood may bear me far
I hope to see my pilot face to face
when I have crossed the bar.

–Alfred Tennyson

The ship

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails in the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength and I stand and watch until at last she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come down to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says, there she goes!”

Gone Where? Gone from my sight... that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says, “There she goes!” there are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, “There she comes!”

Henry Jackson Van Dyke (1852-1933)

Do not stand by my grave and weep
I am not there, I do not sleep.

I am a thousands winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints of snow.

I am the sun on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awake in the morning’s hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush or quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the stars that shine at night.

Do not stand by my grave and cry,
I am not there, I did not die.

Abdee

We are gathered here today to say our goodbyes, at least in this earthly existence, and to assure that your last wishes are fulfilled, and to somehow thank you for everything you did for us.

You spent your life trying to teach us to be good, honest, decent, loving human beings. To love each other and those around us, to know the difference between good and bad. And even now in the end, you have taught us to never give up, that there is always hope.

Death is nothing at all -- I have only slipped away into the next room. Whatever we were to each other, that we are still. Call me by my old familiar name, speak to me in the easy way which you always used. Laugh as we always laughed together. Play, smile, think of me, pray for me. Let my name be the household word that it always was. Let it be spoken without effort. Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it ever was; there is absolutely unbroken continuity. Why should I be out of your mind because I am out of your sight? I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near just around the corner. All is well. Nothing is past; nothing is lost. One brief moment and all will be as it was before -- only better, infinitely happier and forever...
