

# Be Astonished, Tell About It

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## CALL TO PRAYER

LEADER: As we come together for prayer, I ask you to be mindful of the prophets among us, and of those visionaries who remind us to live life fully and to enjoy it. The light of God's revelation never ends. We glory in God's presence in this world. Here is a series of quotes from the poet Mary Oliver interspersed with the words of modern-day prophets and Holy Scripture. All the readings speak of the meaning of the divine in human life. After each reading, please pause briefly for reflection.

## READINGS

READER: From the poem "Poppies," by Mary Oliver. "But I also say this: that light is an invitation to happiness, and that happiness, when it's done right, is a kind of holiness, palpable and redemptive."

READER: Jesus said, "Take care, then, that the light in you not become darkness. If your whole body is full of light, and no part of it is in darkness, then it will be as full of light as a lamp illuminating you with its brightness." (Luke 11:35-36)

READER: Statesman and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi wrote these words: "I do dimly perceive that while everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together; that creates, dissolves and recreates. For I can see that in the midst of death, life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists, in the midst of darkness, light persists."

READER: Pope Francis reminds us that now is the time to be open to the future. "We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace."

READER: Here again is the poet Mary Oliver, from her book, *Long Life*: "And that is just the point ... how the world, moist and beautiful, calls to each of us to make a new and serious response. That's the big question, the one the world throws at you every morning. 'Here you are, alive. Would you like to make a comment?'"

READER: In the book *Made for Goodness*, Desmond Tutu, retired Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, attests to the glory of diversity. "We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know. We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. All are welcome: black, white, red, yellow, rich, poor, educated, not educated, male, female, gay, straight, all, all, all. We all belong to this family, this human family, God's family."

READER: Listen to the words of Fr. James Martin, Jesuit priest, from *Between Heaven and Mirth*: "All you have to do is look around. And sometimes, it helps to look outside the walls of the church, to the stuff of everyday life, in order to better appreciate the value of joy, humor, and laughter. ... Joy is not simply a fleeting feeling or an evanescent emotion; it is a deep-seated result of one's connection to God."

READER: Turning to the disciples in private, Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it." (Luke 10:23-24)

READER: A closing thought from Mary Oliver, in the poem "Sometimes":

"Instructions for living a life:  
Pay attention.  
Be astonished.  
Tell about it."

LEADER: What has astonished you lately? How will you tell about it? With these questions in mind, let's pray together.

ALL: Infinite God, may we live joyfully, this year and throughout our lives, open to your revelation and to the holiness in all Creation. May the Holy Spirit inspire us to light up the darkness with our presence.  
Amen.

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