



Advent 2021, Week 4, "The Loving Gaze"

Opening & Closing Prayers

"Desire" by Alice Walker

My desire
is always the same; wherever Life
deposits me:
I want to stick my toe
& soon my whole body
into the water.
I want to shake out a fat broom
& sweep dried leaves
bruised blossoms
dead insects
& dust.
I want to grow
something.
It seems impossible that desire
can sometimes transform into devotion;
but this has happened.
And that is how I've survived:
how the hole
I carefully tended
in the garden of my heart
grew a heart
to fill it.

"The Facts of Life" by Pádraig Ó Tuama, from *Sorry for Your Troubles* (Canterbury Press, 2013)

That you were born
and you will die.
That you will sometimes love enough
and sometimes not.
That you will lie
if only to yourself.
That you will get tired.
That you will learn most from the situations
you did not choose.
That there will be some things that move you
more than you can say.
That you will live



*that you must be loved.
That you will avoid questions most urgently in need of
your attention.
That you began as the fusion of a sperm and an egg
of two people who once were strangers
and may well still be.
That life isn't fair.
That life is sometimes good
and sometimes better than good.
That life is often not so good.
That life is real
and if you can survive it, well,
survive it well
with love
and art
and meaning given
where meaning's scarce.
That you will learn to live with regret.
That you will learn to live with respect.
That the structures that constrict you
may not be permanently constraining.
That you will probably be okay.
That you must accept change
before you die
but you will die anyway.
So you might as well live
and you might as well love.
You might as well love.
You might as well love.*