

## INTRODUCTION



This book is organized into chapters containing different types of blessings. “Through the Day” are prayers that celebrate God’s presence in each moment of the day, from waking to sleeping. In “Holy Moments” I’ve included a variety of prayers that acknowledge the richness of the gifts of life—the love of pets, the ritual of morning coffee (or your favorite morning beverage), the holy gift of discovering a bird’s nest. This chapter includes one of my favorite forms of blessing, “Bless to me” prayers.

The chapter, “Seasons,” contains prayers that mark our journeys through each year from New Year’s Day through Christmas. “Passages” contains prayers for special moments in our lives such as births, marriages, and graduations. “Heart Prayers” are blessings of the world and its people.

In the chapter, “The Struggling Times,” I’ve written blessings for the many stages of hurt, illness, grief, and death that we face as we walk through life. It is my hope that these will bring comfort to you and to those with whom you share this resource.

The book finishes with an acknowledgment that “God Is In” our spirits, our relationships, our communities, our world. God is in each of us and we are grateful.

## Bless to Me Prayers

The “Bless to me” prayer—one of my favorite forms—is an ancient Celtic form. In a “Bless to me” prayer the writer focuses on a tool, item, or activity in an expression of gratitude. It is a way of celebrating the gift of this object or activity, the way it contributes to one’s life. It is a prayer of the present moment, a specific acknowledgment of the presence of the holy, right now, in this place.

Bless to me this kitchen, this truck, this walking the dog, this pillow, this washing of the dishes. Bless to me this bird song, this quiet before sunrise, these falling leaves. When I am fully present in this moment, then I have taken the first step in crafting a “Bless to me” prayer. My hope is that you will find yourself writing these prayers in your journal or upon your heart.

## My “Celtic Clay”

Nestled at the beginning of each chapter I have included a story or reflection about the life of my grandfather, Tom Wilson. Grandpa shaped my life in significant ways and in his life my celtic roots are grounded.

Grandpa lived an amazing life full of adventures. He was a storyteller, so I grew up knowing the stories of his life, the stories of where I came from.

Grandpa was my mother’s dad. He was, perhaps, the most positive influence on my childhood. He helped me know, deep down to my core, that I was loved, unconditionally, by him, by God. He was true goodness in the world.

Grandpa was born in South Africa, the son of an English father and an Irish mother who had immigrated to South Africa from their respective countries, settled in Kimberly, met, married, and had a family. When Grandpa was ten years old, his family went on a trip to England so that Grandpa’s twin brother, Jack, could have surgery on his arm. Little sister, Eileen,

was eight years old. They took passage from Cape Town on the passenger ship, Balmoral Castle. But World War I was breaking out and, by the time they reached England, the country was at war, the surgeon they were to see had been drafted, and civilian travel back to South Africa was impossible.

Unable to return home, the family visited County Clare, Ireland and spent several months with his mother Maggie's family on the farm where she grew up. Her mother, Mary Griffin, lived with Maggie's brother, Jim, and his wife, Mariah. The Wilsons stayed there long enough for the children to enroll in school and get to know their Irish roots a little bit. Grandpa said that the schoolmaster was not kind to grandpa and his siblings—he was not fond of the British, and these three had a father who was British.

Great-grandpa Wilson was trying to determine how to get the family back to their home in South Africa. He figured that the only way to get home was to travel through a country that was not involved in the war. Since the United States had not entered the war, the family bought passage to New York. They planned to visit relatives in Oklahoma and then to return to South Africa by taking a ship from New Orleans, Louisiana. In May of 1915, the family was waiting in Liverpool, England with tickets to travel to the United States on the Lusitania. The Lusitania was sunk by a German U-boat off the coast of Ireland as it headed for port in Liverpool.

The family waited in England for the next ship they could travel on to the U.S. They embarked from Liverpool on the American liner Philadelphia with a number of the Lusitania survivors. Grandpa used to tell that the survivors were afraid and stayed up on deck for most of the passage from England to New York.

By the time the family made it to the United States and then to Oklahoma, the United States was on the verge of entering the war; the American lives lost in the sinking of the Lusitania had contributed to the call for war.

The Wilson family had traveled to southwestern Oklahoma near Lawton to visit grandpa's aunt Mary Griffin Scott. When the United States declared war, civilian travel was stopped and the Wilsons were stranded again. By the end of the World War I, there was no money left for the family to travel back home. Great-grandpa Wilson, having never farmed a day of his life, nevertheless, bought a farm in southwestern Oklahoma and began to eek out a life for them in this new place.

This unusual pilgrimage from South Africa to Oklahoma changed the course of their lives, lucky for me. I was born with this rich legacy of courage and adaptability, and a deep gratitude for life, whatever it presents.

## Using This Book

It's my hope that you will use this book as a source of blessings for your life and for the lives of those you love. You may also carry in you the clay of the Celts or live your life as if everything is a blessing from the Creator. If this is a new concept for you, I hope that this book will inspire you to open your eyes, your ears, your heart to the wonders of creation, of relationships, of adventures that are going on around you each day.

As I write this book, I imagine your hands thumbing through these pages, reading slowly, letting the words sink deeply into your heart.

I imagine you finding just the right blessing for a need you are having or marking pages to share with a friend. I imagine you writing the blessing that is needed by a friend who is having a hard time or had lost a loved one.

I imagine you stopping in the middle of a walk to watch the slow progression of an ant carrying a leaf across your path. Or running outside to watch the beauty of a sunset. I imagine you, your eyes wide open, taking a photo of a spring flower or, in the early morning, writing in your heart a blessing for a new day.

Let yourself enter this world of blessings and gratitude, of praise and pilgrimage. May you find yourself blessed by these pages whether you are new to this path or whether you already live in a world surrounded by the ordinary experiences that mark the way through an ordinary life.

May you be blessed this day. And may you walk gently into the day, ready to see blessings all around you.