

A LITURGY FOR CONTEMPLATING

the Empty Bedroom of a Child Who Has Left Home

HEIDI JOHNSTON

Eternal, unchanging God,
meet me here in this moment as my spirit
hovers over the bittersweet emptiness of this
place that once echoed with noise
and life and laughter and possibility.

Help me see the space before me
as the next proper stage in this,
the story of my child,
and of my child within our family,
and of our family within your greater story—
the end of which will not be changed by
circumstance or undone by the passing of time.

Give me grace to look back with gratitude
and not regret, treasuring the memories that
come so easily to mind.

ONE MIGHT PAUSE HERE TO REFLECT AND GIVE THANKS.

Thank you, Father God,
for the privilege of loving and nurturing
this child over so many years.

Forgive my countless failings.
Use them only as reminders of your grace.

If, in our home, there has been
any delight in you,
any hunger for your Word,
any love for your people,
may such things take root even now,
growing ever deeper
and spreading farther
for the extension of your kingdom.

As we move into this new season,
teach me to accept with gladness
the independence that has always been
the end goal of parenting—in the knowledge
that the bond between parent and child
will not end with this letting go.

Even as I acknowledge my changing role,
help me to be a faithful supporter,
always offering an open door
and a listening ear,
and, above all, remaining fervent in prayer.

Thank you that my love for this child,
although at times I imagine it unmatched
in all of humanity, is but a shadow
of your own never-ending love which follows
them now where I cannot, and knows all that
now remains hidden from me.

Give me the courage to entrust to your care
that which was never mine to keep. Bless and
protect your child through all that is to come,

captivating their heart and sustaining them
with hope. Grant them wisdom and
discernment and the courage to live well
in the light of all that is eternally true.

ONE MIGHT PAUSE TO PRAY FOR ANY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES NOW
FACING THEIR CHILD.

Just as this child was always yours,
so also is this empty space,
to do with as you will.
Breathe now into this void,
showing me how to best use it for your glory.

Are there others in need of nurture and care,
who, for even a short season,
may find refuge in this space?
Or perhaps it will become a sanctuary,
dedicated to your service in other ways.
A place where I, or others, may use or hone
or explore whatever gifts and talents
you have entrusted to us
for the building of your kingdom.

ONE MIGHT PAUSE HERE TO PRAY FOR GUIDANCE AND WISDOM.

And now, with fondness for all that is past
and anticipation of all that is yet to come,
help me embrace this new season without fear,
looking always ahead to that day when we
will see that no ending was what it seemed;
when all our stories finally merge
into one epic tale of your relentless faithfulness,

and we find that we are forever home,
delighting to dwell in the rooms
you have prepared for us.

Amen.