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A Candle in the Window

Peter Millar

Words to encourage us all in tough times.

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### **Journeying with Covid 19:**

Early in January of 2016 (as many of you already know) I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma (cancer in the bone marrow). Myeloma is at the present time incurable but it is treatable and I am deeply grateful for the last five years of life. More than grateful! However, from the start of the pandemic it has been made clear to me in various circular letters from the Scottish Government and the National Health Service that I would have to 'shield' and that if I did get the virus it may present real health difficulties, given that I survived the virus. Naturally I was delighted that I kept free of the virus in 2020 but in mid-February I was told I was positive. A few days later I became very ill and was admitted to hospital where I was soon receiving oxygen. Initially the outlook was not great, but I have pulled through and am now back home - full of gratitude to the amazing NHS, to the Source of Life who holds us all each day, to my loving and supportive family and to the many friends around the world who held me in their prayers. The Spring sunshine streaming through my windows at home has never felt more beautiful and comforting! For me a new chapter has opened as my strength returns day by day.

Perhaps in the days ahead I may be more able to reflect further about this recent experience. The virus itself raises a huge raft of medical, spiritual and social issues for the world, and for the people who find themselves very sick because of it – this invisible force and global destabiliser in our midst. My time in hospital has also brought home to me yet again the massive injustices at the heart of global medical care. I know only too well that I may not have survived the virus had I not had the back up of a superb and equipped hospital. Yet I must leave that important issue for another time, and be truly thankful for the wonderful and caring staff at the hospital who watched over me in these last weeks and celebrated with me on the day I left for home! As I slowly came back to myself in the hospital a line from a prayer often used in the Iona Community came into my head, **Lord, give us today the essentials of life.** As I pondered these words lying under my oxygen mask, I thought right now I need only one essential and that is...breath. Just to be able to breath without oxygen would be a gift from God. On the day the oxygen mask was finally removed, I knew deep within me I had been given that gift, and that the One who holds us all had restored me to life. Looking back, I understand my tears on that day.

## **The wisdom and vision of Michael Rosen:**

Michael Rosen is renowned for his work as a poet, performer, broadcaster and scriptwriter. He is professor of Children's Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London. Between 2007 and 2009 he was the UK's Children's Laureate. He currently lives in London with his wife and children.

Early on in the pandemic, in 2020, Michael caught the virus and what followed was months on wards: six weeks in an induced coma, and many more weeks of rehab as the National Health Service saved his life then got him back on his feet. Throughout Michael's stay in intensive care, a note book lay at the end of his bed, where nurses and others who cared for him wrote letters of hope and support. Embarking on the long, tough road to recovery, Michael was soon ready to start writing about his time in hospital and this near death experience.

And now in the Spring of 2021 his wonderful new book: **Many Different Kinds of Love – A Story of Life, Death and the NHS** has been published by Penguin Random House London. (ISBN 978-1-52910-945-0). Given my own recent experience in hospital I found it greatly encouraging to read his book, but I feel many others who have never had the virus would gain much from it, as his writing powerfully and beautifully illumines, from a particular and important perspective, what thousands around the world have and are experiencing. I am sure his book will in years to come be regarded as one of the treasures that emerged from these uncertain days. It may be for some a tough read but I see his book as much more - a testimony to hope. And it shines with his poems, humour and wisdom. Thank you Michael for making us much more aware.

## **May these words give us the inner courage we need in these times:**

*My heart longs for the depths, for the soul satisfaction of plumbing the Real and the Holy. My breath seeks its Source, the full inhale that awakens and enlivens. A still sanctuary draws me towards You, Source and Silence, Welcome and Wellspring, Love and Life. I tarry here, my limbs relax, my core expands to hold, and be held by You. I am held, and I am helped. I lift my head - my vision clears. A song of joy erupts from my being, breath carries praise from the depths to the heights, joining the song of the universe which is love. Understanding grows, granting wisdom in the night and strength for the day.*

Words based on Psalm 63 from Carla A. Gross-Miller - Psalms Redux, Poems and Prayers. Canterbury Press, Norfolk. UK. (ISBN 978 - 1 -84825-639 -2)