

MORNING MEDITATIONS

(2015)

Marcus Cumberlege

“I choose to be happy”

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This collection of one hundred meditations and prayers, written over the last fifteen years, is divided into seven sections comprising:-

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These pages are primarily intended for sharing with people who have trouble getting up in the morning and who want to start their day on a spiritual basis, with help from whatever Divine Source they may believe in. They are admittedly intimate and confessional.

I am grateful to Martine Dassonville for her technical assistance and to the friends who kindly read some of the manuscripts. Your feedback is welcome at marcus.cumberlege@skynet.be.

TO THE READER

Although I normally set my alarm for seven o'clock in the morning, on the advice of a friend who warned me that lying in bed after waking up was a dangerous habit, I usually get up either at four, in my hypermanic phase, which lasts about a week, or at ten in my depressive phase, which sometimes lasts longer. Most of these meditations were written in the hours before dawn, while recovering from the adverse effects of my prescribed night-medication, with the purpose of raising my own morale therapeutically and hoisting myself onto the 'feel good frequency'. I would like to share the fruits of these experiences with everyone who has known the discomfort of a depression, whether morning, manic, seasonal, occasional or chronic, and with many others struggling to make the 'click' from negative to positive thinking. Actively working with these texts has succeeded in transforming my waking gloom into a state of bright awareness.

Men and women with an acute alcohol problem (we were usually the last to know it!) can be helped into a happy stabilization of their condition provided they are honest enough to admit to themselves that they are powerless over that substance and that their lives have become unmanageable. In other words, that they have departed from the broad highway of normal healthy life and are now lost in the woods of a peculiar kind of insanity, consisting of the inability to refuse the first fatal glass, and the many more that inevitably follow. The disease of alcoholism causes mental and physical pain to the drinker and psychic stress to those in his or her entourage. Nobody threw us on the floor and poured alcohol down our throats, although it was characteristic of our behaviour to blame a person or an institution for any mishap that befell us. We lost our jobs (if we had them) and our agonized and antagonized friends (whom we had let down time and time again). We nevertheless enjoyed hobnobbing with our boozy soulmates at fashionable seaside resorts and in plush psychiatric wards, where we made a play for the nurses. We were perfect spouses when dry.

The reader unaffected by alcoholism or manic depression might justifiably wonder whether any useful purpose is served by spending a lot of time conjuring one's ailments with pen and paper and then publishing the results in book form. However, I have usually succeeded, through the very act of writing, in changing negative feelings with which most people can identify into prose of a robust optimism. Never do I feel better than when sitting at my desk in the undisturbed silence of my living room, letting my thoughts flow across the page, and later studying them attentively and putting my own suggestions into practice. What has worked for me might work for others.

I am by no means a Buddhist monk, a habitual zen meditator or an ascetic, but a fairly average person who trusts in the ultimate goodness of existence. I believe that the reader can easily translate the name Amida, Buddha of eternal light and life, which occurs here and there in the texts, into the equivalent terminology of his or her personal spiritual experience. It is common nowadays for people of all denominations including atheists, especially those practising a twelve step programme, to refer to their Higher Power or source of help as *God as I understand Him*. I became a Pure Land follower more by accident than design, when reading an essay by D.T. Suzuki more than thirty years ago, and since then have never ceased from the practice of 'reciting the Name'. This satisfies me completely and gives meaning and simplicity to an otherwise confusing existence.

It is not my intention to convert anyone to my way of thinking (which often consists of not thinking at all!) but simply to offer myself as an illustration of how one 'sufferer' has learned to accept certain 'things he cannot change'. I will never be able to – or want to – pick up a glass of alcohol with impunity, and I may be saddled with a mild form of ups and downs for the rest of my days. This is no longer the great hardship I once imagined it to be. The practice of these morning meditations has increased my zest for life and transformed loneliness into a kind of blissful solitude which I now propose to share with you. This is the sum of my experience, strength and hope.

GETTING UP

Getting up in the early hours of the morning gives you a chance to think, commune and write undisturbed. This can result in illuminating discoveries about yourself and your relationship to life. It should not be tinged with loneliness, pessimism or anxiety.

It is important that your soul be nourished with a healthy dose of optimism at the outset of the day. Otherwise the hours that follow may be clouded by an insistent sense of failure and shortcoming, a mood of dissatisfaction that is hard to shake off.

However negative your outlook on awakening may have been, get yourself on the feel-good frequency as quickly as possible, and by any means that occur to you. Ask for help from *God as you understand Him*, from all the protective angels and bodhisattvas, male and female, in whom you believe, from the heavenly bodies and from the teachers whose knowledge is stored in books.

Think of your loved ones, and tell yourself how happy they would be to find you well. Be glad that you are alive and have yet one more opportunity to create the world you have often dreamed about.

The time before dawn should be a seed-bed of hopes, plans, visions; mental and spiritual preparation. Enjoy to the fingertips what Wordsworth called “the bliss of solitude”. You are always watched over and blessed.



My soul

has chosen.

I get up

glad

and sober

to enjoy

my day.

Archangel Michael

protect us from all unwanted

influences and thoughts

CLEANSING

Namo Amida Butsu!

Protecting my heart

I now close my aura

to everything and everybody

except my Higher Self.

Namo Amida Butsu!

EXPERIENCE

I am not a physical being
having a spiritual experience
but I am a spiritual being
having a physical experience,
which is often painful.

Adapted from Elisabeth Constantine

Amida, my Belovèd

Source of infinite light and life,
illuminate my captive spirit
and raise me to a happy mood
in the presence of your angels.

I long to be at One with you
and thirst for the bliss which flows
from your wisdom and compassion.
Grant me a taste of your glory.

DEVICE FOR LIFE

Go in search for the positive.

Make use of the positive.

Be in all things positive.

Enjoy in all the positive.

Given to me by John Meyfroodt.

SEEDS OF JOY

I may not be feeling on top of
the world as I say this prayer,
but experience is here to assure me
there is a wonderful day ahead.

If You brought me *to* it, You will
bring me *through* it. These words,
carefully pondered, sow seeds
of joy and confidence in my heart.

A slight shift in my attitude now
can produce unexpected results.

The good times are for milking.

I will make this a day to remember.

Eleventh step

Sought through prayer and meditation

to improve our conscious contact

with God *as we understood Him,*

praying only for knowledge of His will for us

and the power to carry that out.

HIS WILL FOR ME

The God of my understanding
would like me to love myself
and be at peace with the world.
Thy will be done, by me, today.

When guided by Other Power
everything goes much better.

When rank self-will takes over
I make mistakes of judgement.

And now? Shall I not be grateful
for the marvellous gift of life,
improving my conscious contact
with Amida, the source of light?

A PRECIOUS HUMAN LIFE

Every day, *think* as you wake up,
today I am fortunate to have woken up,
I am alive, I have a precious human life,
I am not going to waste it, I am going
to use all my energies to develop myself,
to expand my heart out to others,
to achieve enlightenment for the benefit
of all beings. I am going to have kind
thoughts towards others, I am not going
to get angry, or think badly about others:
I am going to benefit others as much as I can.

H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama

PRAYER FOR TODAY

A new day is born – your gift, Amida, to this grateful recovering alcoholic.

Let me awaken now to the light of the true Dharma and put a real effort into being of service to others.

Remind me constantly, I pray, that I am powerless over alcohol, tobacco, coffee, sugar, sleep and sex; people, places and things.

Reveal your plan for me today and grant me the willingness and strength to carry it out cheerfully.

“One saying of the Name eliminates one’s entire karmic evil.”

Namo Amida Butsu!

SHORT JOURNEY

This day has not yet dawned, but I already feel your powerful presence here beside me in the room.

Sipping my early morning tea and gradually coming to life, I raise my soul towards the light, giving thanks for the night that is past.

With you in my heart I will never know the meaning of loneliness. With my little hand safely clasped in your big one we will make the short journey together from now until another night.

No task will be too boring or difficult to undertake, no challenge insurmountable, for your supportive love encourages me and buoys me up.

I believe. I have a faith that works. I trust in your great wisdom. I am embraced by your compassion, never to be abandoned.

Look upon your children, grant us your guidance, willingness and strength. And if things become too much, carry us in the palm of your hand.

MANIC DEPRESSION

Namo Amida Butsu!

I suffer badly from my manic depression.

It gets me in the morning, making me groggy, miserable, bad-tempered, ineffective and sometimes suicidal.

I am entirely ready for you to remove this handicap, however and whenever it may please you to do so.

For I long to be at peace with myself, close to you, helpful to Maria, kind and friendly to other people.

Spare me the deliberate manufacture of misery and relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do your will.

Namo Amida Butsu!

ORACION

God, as each one of us understands you,

Help us, comfort us, strengthen us, guide us
with your unconditional love.

Grant us more patience and greater trust:
in you and in our fellow human beings.

Enable us to hear your voice amidst the noise
of our own thoughts; and show us how to pray.

Let us see this defiled world with the eyes of
wisdom and compassion.

SAINT THERESA'S PRAYER

May you be at peace with yourself today.

May you trust God that you are always exactly where you should be.

May you constantly be reminded of the infinite power that is born of this trust.

May you make use of the gifts you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you experience the joy of being a child of God.

May His presence be anchored in your bones, allowing your soul the freedom to sing, dance and love with gratitude.

These things are there for all of us.

Blessings upon you and greetings of peace and light!

TO THERESA UP THERE

There is a certain amount
of peace in me, but not enough.
My mind is restless and confused,
my moods are unpredictable.

The belief that I'm in the right place,
now and at all times,
doing the right thing
to the best of my ability,
gives me badly needed power.

On days like this I'll make use of my gifts,
passing on to less fortunate individuals
the love I have been so generously given.

It's great to be one of His kids,
usefully employed in the effort department
and leaving the results to Him.

Overcoming my stagnation,
I feel a blissful presence in my bones.
It inspires me to dance and sing,
to relax completely and to be myself.

RELEASE

Feeling good is the purpose
of these morning meditations
and it can be brought about
by making the simple “click”.

Negative switches to positive.
Everything is as it should be.
You brim with self-confidence.
Good things are on the way.

Suddenly you find yourself
feeling contented and released.
Your mind is aglow with light.
You are a different person.

MARIA

I am so happy and grateful

now that I am in love with

Maria. I want to enjoy the

true bliss of a happy marriage.

I will take her as she is,

often unexpected, always herself.

I want to share all my life with her:

to communicate openly and freely.

I want to be her mate and companion.

I will have the courage to be truthful,

to dig out my deepest feelings.

I will be honest with Maria.

She does so very, very much for me!

Each day offers me new ways of helping her

and making our life more wonderful.

She is right to say "This too shall pass".

She deserves lots of kisses and cuddles.

I love to snuggle up close to her.

I find her attractive and desirable.

She is my adored and sacred object.

I worship her with body and mind.

Thank you, Maria. Thank you, Maria.

Thank you, Maria, my darling wife.

DEFINITION OF LOVE

There is no greater power in the Universe
than the power of love. The feeling of love
is the highest frequency you can emit.

If you could wrap every thought in love,
if you could love everything and everyone,
your life would be transformed.

- RHONDA BYRNE

BLISS

I am receiving Great Love.

I am bathed in happiness.

I know good things are coming to me.

My heart is at peace.



Nada te turbe,
nada te espante,
todo se pasa,
Dios no se muda;
la paciencia
todo lo alcanza;
quien a Dios tiene
nada le falta:
Sólo Dios basta.

TERESA DE AVILA

TAKE COMFORT

Even before opening your eyes, be grateful for the night you have just spent in a comfortable bed.

Slowly exchange that querulous feeling of discontent for an easy-going acceptance of everything as it is.

Take comfort from the many loved ones who may be thinking of you kindly at this very moment.

Try not to see the day ahead as an imposition but as a succession of enjoyable situations which will unfold in God's time.

Relinquish your obstinate grip on dissatisfaction. Rest assured, peace of mind is just round the corner, and joy is only a few steps away.

As the light of understanding dawns, raise your sight to the limitless sky and give thanks for the hot glass of tea in your hand.

THE CLICK

Think of your true and intimate self,
your soul, the person you really are.

Is this entity a loser or a winner?

Have you come all this way for nothing?

Are you more than just a passing mood?

Can you imagine the enormous benefits
of feeling well? I am extremely sorry
to have to ask you all these questions.

A stable comfort is within your grasp.

Surrender completely to the music
of planets Jupiter and Neptune.

Enter freely into the kingdom of joy.

THE DISTANT SHORE

Everything has its time and place.
All things are subject to ebb and flow.
Change is a major constant in our lives.
The mood you are in is no exception.
Guilt and shame are completely out of place.
For some time now you have been fit and well,
riding the pleasant hyper-manic ski.
Look at your agenda for the last month:
it's full of exciting poems and appointments.
The tide is out now. Nature takes a rest.
Wavelets lap feebly on the distant shore.
This is your body's natural rhythm.
The moon herself is in constant flux,
not always in agreement with the sun,
not always visible from your window.
No need for maudlin worry and anxiety.
Sit back and soak up passive energy.
Empty your mind and relax your muscles.
The less resistance you offer now,
the sooner you'll be on your feet again.

FREEDOM FROM PAIN

You woke up identifying with
your pain body. Disentangle
yourself from the nets of sleep.

Awaken to reality by becoming
the watcher and the witness of
your illusory, negative self.

In so doing, the pain will vanish
and you will be born into the Now.

This is the best place you can be.

Here you feel overpowered by
an unexpected wellness. Hold
tight to this newly won glory!

POSITIVE WAVELENGTH

I have put my finger on it:
You woke up, as you often do,
in a pool of self pity.

Switch over immediately
to a positive wavelength,
dim out the background static.

Remember Amida and Kuan Yin.
They have never let you down,
they are always here for you.

This moment is a fresh beginning.
Hey, isn't it great to be alive?
One nembutsu settles your birth!

It's unnecessary to think ahead.
The day will look after itself.
You will be given all you need.

Today, and just for today,
everything will go smoothly,
everything will run on wheels.

GOOD MORNING

To Jan

This morning, and every morning this week, I will make a big effort to be good-tempered and non-judgmental. Let the smiling faces of Mickétix, Maria and my Nova Scotian family be an inspiration!

Pray deeply and rid your mind of all negative thoughts. Your day is now about to begin. Sip your beautifully blended tea and let go that nagging sense of doom.

A flood of gratitude will carry you forwards, leading to willingness and resolution. Delight in small pleasures will quickly follow. The day has unimagined joys in store for you.

Staring vacantly into space gets nobody anywhere. Put the picture of a loved one in your mind and imagine yourselves deep in conversation. Cherish this vision. It will work wonders.

I am beginning to live, now that I have stopped worrying about what other people think of me.

MY FRIEND

This morning, like so many mornings in the past,
I try to visualize your beautiful smiling features
clearly in my mind.

In all your honest simplicity you appear before me
as I meditate. The faces of a dozen loved ones melt
into yours.

The silence of my lonely room is broken by the music
of your voice in my head. It touches a chord deep in
my very being.

Thinking of you – and how we met – fills me with
wonder and gratitude. Your presence in my heart
gives me the courage I need to start the day.

MORNING BLUES

“I think of and leave my morning blues
Behind me in the bed where they belong”

Let me come to life as I read these words, saying them
over and over again if necessary, until they sink into my
fuzzy head.

As I look around the room, in search of inspiration, infil
me with wonder and a sense of purpose for today.

Begin by reminding me of the pure zen pleasure of
slicing fruit, the joy of selflessly undertaken action.

Make me really glad to see my sweet Maria come down.
She is a real treasure in this uncertain world of sham,
drudgery and broken dreams.

I am not fearful of the hours ahead, for I am a fully
paid-up child of the universe with every right to be here,
prosper and enjoy.

“Today I will pamper my child within,
Creating time for laughter and romance”

INNER CHILD

Listen to me, says my Inner Child. I'll give you the guidance you need.

Just relax and take it easy. Let go and Let God. Don't worry – be happy.

Be sweet and kind to yourself, not too hard, not too soft.

Have faith in archangel Michael and his heavenly host to heal you and keep you safe.

Do whatever you want – and seize the moments that are given to you.

My inner child is playful and naughty and wants to have a good time.

Aren't you taking yourself too seriously? Isn't life meant to be enjoyed?

ALL IS WELL

“All is well” - say the words gently to yourself again and again until they sink in with the certainty of truth and melt your resistance to feeling good - until a warm glow of self-confidence steals over you, and you realize you are the right person in the right place.

All is indeed well, with you and with the world. However uncomfortable you feel now, it is only a feeling, and it will pass. Simply focus with love and acceptance on the present moment, and forget the night that is behind you. You will soon be on top of things and the familiar joyous creative urge will come back even before you expect it.

Amida, the embodiment of wisdom and compassion, is with you at all times and in all places (even now!), giving you comfort, strength and guidance. The gateless gate of his Pure Land is always open to receive you. Imagine the bliss of Buddhahood, the joy of 'coming home'.

A mood-change can occur in a twinkling of an eye. By the time you have read this twice you will be a different person. Let go now and trust in the goodness of life and the healing angels. The day has wonderful surprises in store for you.

You are not alone: Maria loves you tenderly, and many a dear relative and friend would be glad to hear from you. Take the bull by the horns and use every means known to you to create in yourself a happy, uplifted mood.

TOLLE'S NOW

Whatever comes into your mind is good.

You will be given everything you need.

Happiness only exists in the present.

Intuition is a doorway to joy.

Listen to the promptings of your heart.

Focus on that feeling of wellness *now*.

What you feel *now* is all that really counts.

This evening is only a fleeting thought.

Now is the “narrow gate that leads to life”.

It feels good to focus on the here and now.

I'll narrow my life down to this moment.

Past and future cease to be a burden.

I'm left with a light body and a clear mind.

Sitting in front of the words I've written

I experience the bliss of Being.

There are no problems - only solutions.

I make space in my mind for fresh ideas.

Sometimes I feel so happy I want to dance.

Fear comes from focusing on the future,
melancholy from living in the past.

I have stopped creating pain for myself.

Manic depression has ceased to exist.

I have many reasons to be happy.

My negative self-image has vanished.

I talk myself into a lively mood.

A small push creates a feeling of joy.

When you are guided by Other Power
and follow Good Orderly Directions
a whispered intimation is enough
to set you blazing undiscovered trails.

As a gull rides the wind, you float on time:
ten minutes from now seems a world away.

Nature is a temple whose pillars speak
a language everyone can understand.

SUN WORSHIP

Nothing urgent needs doing.

Enjoy the music, enjoy the tea.

If spring or summer, go into
the garden and relax. Worship
the sun and expose yourself to
its illuminating & invigorating
beams. It's a source of light and
energy, of joyous celebration.

You only have to imagine Maria
sitting beside you on the bench,
the embodiment of Kuan Yin.

Everything will take place in God's
time. You are on the right road,
the road of Happy Destiny. Stepwork
and sponsorship lie ahead and the
inner child will rejoice in your efforts
to have fun and enjoy ...



TO A PILGRIM

As soon as you can possibly
pull yourself together
feel glad and grateful
for the gift of this new day
which, as you will soon realize,
brings with it fresh awareness
(to be shared with others!)
of harmony, peace and joy.

Drink your tea at leisure.

It makes me happy to think
we shall be companions today
on your journey through life.

SAINT-EXUPERY'S PRAYER

I do not ask for wonders and visions, Lord
but for the strength needed to live each day as it comes.

Make me more confident in the use of the time allotted me.

Grant me enough wisdom to distinguish between what is of
primary and what is of secondary importance.

Spare me the naïve belief that everything in life should run
on wheels.

Teach me that difficulties, defeat, missed chances and upsets
are all part of life and can lead to growth and ripeness.

Remind me that the heart and the intellect often represent
conflicting interests.

Please give me, at the right moment, someone courageous enough
to tell me the truth with love.

You know how badly friendship is needed.

May I be worthy of this, the loveliest, riskiest, most difficult
gift life has to offer.

Protect me from the fear of failure in the world's eyes.

Give me what I need rather than what I want.

Above all, show me how to enjoy little things.

FIRST CUPPA

Gratitude for the million mercies of a loving God, for Amida's boundless wisdom and compassion, is the keynote of this early morning hour. I now decide to banish 'stinking thinking', making space in the mind for fearlessness and enjoyment.

A heart brimming with thankfulness has no room for negative conceits. As soon as positive feelings arise I start to see things through brighter eyes. The weight of the night slips from my back. Mister Booze disappears into his eerie cave.

Foolishly, I still struggle to achieve a happiness many have wished for me, but which is unattainable without *your* frequent loving interventions on my behalf. I ask you for freedom from alcohol in the 24 hours ahead. The rest will follow, provided I take certain well known steps. What joy it gives me to be able to say this!

Time is on my side. Breakfast-making is the first of many pleasures that await me. I will handle this day in good faith, taking everything as it comes. I feel your comforting hand on my shoulder as I say these words.

CERTAINTY

I am certain Amida wants me
to be at this exact spot
at this precise moment in time,
doing what I am doing
and thinking what I am thinking.

I am precious, special and unique,
a child of the universe
imbued with a sacred destiny
and blessed with a sense of purpose.

Although my love and respect
for my fellow men and women
is of paramount importance,
actually what I think of other people
and what other people think of me
are two things I think about less often.

At times when I find life confusing
and my friends difficult to get on with
I can always fall back on the nembutsu
with a believing and trusting heart.

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

I am deeply grateful for whatever sleep I have had, even though it may have seemed inadequate or excessive.

Strangely enough, I slumbered in a luxurious bed of my own with a teddy bear and a dreamcatcher on either side of me, not with the clochards on the streets of Paris.

After a sober awakening and a few delicious cups of tea a day of unimaginable joys awaits me.

I am grateful for the lovely people in my life (I'm sure to meet some of them today!) and most of all for my closest family who, more than anybody else, are a constant and reliable source of love.

On days like this, when a wisp of negativity hangs in the air, I will turn my thoughts to the boundless wisdom and compassion of the Tathagata.

Stretched flat at the feet of the Great Buddha, I vow to offer all my resources to the welfare of sentient beings. May we all one day be liberated.

THE MASTERPIECE

*Peace and happiness
To all sentient beings –
My prayer for today*

This morning early, on awakening, I take my personal inventory and find no negative items in it. I start with a clean sheet. I have many good reasons to rejoice. I will ponder two or three of them before going any further ...

24 inviting hours stretch out in front of me, beginning with these moments of enjoyable reflection. Yesterday in turn yields pleasant memories to see me through the grey patches. There are no flies in the ointment ...

With your support I feel as if I could move mountains. I intend to work the steps, putting efforts first and leaving the results to you. I realize I will need a lot of patience, love and determination to create the living masterpiece I have in mind.

I start my day by praising you with every fibre in my being. Then I set my mind to doing the next best thing, under your guidance and protection. Thank you for granting me this opportunity to grow, prosper and be happy.

SHORT PRAYER

Grant me the common sense

to love and accept myself

exactly the way I am,

exactly the way I feel right now,

and not to beat myself up

on early mornings like this

for my imagined inadequacies.

SELF PITY

This is a serious warning.

Avoid self pity like the plague.

It is a poison which rots the soul.

It undermines positive thinking.

It attacks happiness at the roots.

Turn your thoughts to Rida.

Turn your thoughts to Zina.

You're lucky to have such good young friends

who are always glad to see you

whatever mood you're in -

and only a stone's throw from your door.

OK, you've had a bad night and feel grotty.

Self pity only makes things worse,

adds an unnecessary burden,

bores you into the ground.

Remember the good times you've had

with those two lively Moroccans:

the hugs, the laughter and the chat.

You have a lot to learn from them!

Banish self pity forthwith and be glad

you have a whole day to enjoy.

Nothing stands in your way.

Start now – positive, empty-minded

and free of the ogre self pity.

AVERAGE DAY

in the life of the slightly depressive person

You're here for a purpose, however obscure it may seem to you now.

If nothing sensible comes into your head, switch off and take a rest.

One cannot please everyone, or make an omelette without breaking eggs.

No day goes by without good things happening – your job is to attract them.

In the bread of our life love is the yeast which makes miracles happen.

Even a little bit of gratitude can give one extra mileage.

There's a rightness in things which absolutely nothing can contradict.

We are in the effort department, said Charles, *The results are up to Him.*

The alcoholic mind has a vast capacity for distortion.

Stay close to the program – go back to it frequently during the day.

Don't hesitate to use the phone – it's an important tool in your kit.

You may not feel great, but the person you call will be glad to hear you.

It is O.K. to think about the good things which happened yesterday.

But the true magic of life is contained in the present moment – now!

The way you feel today determines the way you will feel tomorrow.

Eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive.

This too shall pass – it is enough to say these words over and over.

You will pick up says your wife, and strangely enough she is always right.

Life is marvellously worthwhile. Drum this message into your thick skull.

Kuan Yin the compassionate is truly concerned about your welfare.

Entrust wholeheartedly in the saving power of Amida's vow.

Enlightenment is no more than the working of your everyday mind.

There is absolutely no cause for worry: nobody will eat you.

Start now by feeling the joy that will come to you later in the day.

Remember: you are here for a purpose. Good things are bound to follow.

My inability to see God's love at work is quite staggering.

Accept the way you feel this morning. The tide is out, but coming in.

This day is mine. I determine to enjoy and make the most of it.

It's largely thanks to Maria that I'm alive and sober today.

Nothing is more difficult – or more productive – than doing nothing.

Release all feelings of guilt and anxiety – nothing needs doing.

Learn to appreciate the joys of solitude, the hour before dawn.

I let go and surrender to a moment of complete abandon.

If you want to be happy, cultivate a positive frame of mind.

I want things to work out easily, according to Amida's plan.

To feel good is the ultimate goal – at all times and in all places.

TODAY

This day is the best day I will ever know. Its span of 24 hours contains the entire glory of creation. Free of depression, and breathing the serene air of normality, I begin to turn my thoughts to others. Yesterday was a good, sober day. I will pause now and think about its joys, bringing them with me into today. Tomorrow is no more than a thought in Amida's mind, and I have no reason to fear it. Today I am free to choose between happiness, indifference and misery, and I go for the former.

I come to life quickly, eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive. I shed the uncomfortable inertia of my morning blues. I start the day on a note of lightness and gratitude, giving special thanks for the people who make it a joy for me to be alive. May I have contact with some of them today ...

Help me, Amida, to take the early morning in my stride. Grant me vision and prevent any relapse into doomful thinking. Gently lead me on, showing me what is to be done, where my footsteps are to take me and how I can best make conscious contact with you. Strengthened by your compassionate Primal Vow, I will get off the pity pot immediately, ready and willing to do whatever you have in mind for me today.

SCOTLAND

To Verna-Mae

Today I will make a great effort to be non-judgmental. Knowing that acceptance is the answer to all my problems, I will take things as they come, curbing my instinct to criticize, cavil and compare. I won't be hard on myself either.

I'll forget the worn-out thinking mechanisms of the past, be natural, simple, honest and spontaneous. I'll express truth – my truth and the truth of Shinran – as I understand it. Unafraid to enjoy what is beautiful, I'll give to the world, and the world will give to me.

Other Power means to be free of any form of calculation. Release me, therefore, from the urge to control people and situations and to play God. Instead, let my heart be filled with the nembutsu of gratitude.

On difficult days I shall think of Scotland and all the wonderful people I have met there. They were truly magical holidays. Faith in Amida combined with application to the principles of my program really does make everything possible for this recovering alcoholic.

THE UPWARD SWING

Isn't it amazing how a spectacular mood change for the better can occur in a matter of minutes?

For an hour or two since waking up, you have struggled in vain to pull your body and mind together.

Despite lashings of tea and water to eliminate the night medication, an obstinate feeling of doom has been overpowering you.

Then it happens – unexpectedly, out of the blue. Suddenly you are free as a bird, released from care.

The upward swing may last 5 minutes, an hour, a morning, a whole day. Wide-eyed, you sit back with a grateful sense of relief.

That insidious depression has released its icy grip on your soul. It's as though it had never happened.

HAANEL'S AFFIRMATION

You are whole, you are perfect,
you are strong, you are powerful,
you are loving, you are confident,
you are harmonious, you are happy.

Whether you're thinking constructively
or idly ruminating, your thoughts are OK.

Whether you're doing something useful or not,
your action or non-action are both excellent.

Why doubt the purpose of existence?

See yourself in a shining, auric light!

You are one of God's favourite children.

You can do no wrong in Amida's eyes.

TO MY BEST BUDDY

Completely free of worry and released from that insistent negative tape which so often buzzes away like static interference at the back of my mind, I face the day ahead with a dazzling sensation of pure acceptance and an unusual amount of self-assurance.

Glad to be myself, at peace with my surroundings and aglow with gratitude, I am wholly delivered from the bonds of fear, seem never to have known the meaning of anxiety. This is it, as far as I'm concerned. This is how I want to be for the rest of my life.

I now feel capable of radiating a sweet temper in whatever company I choose to keep. I lovingly and appreciatively watch myself walking the familiar streets of this busy little city. I am the man, selfless and non-judgmental, anyone would be glad to stop and talk to. My zest for life makes me popular wherever I go.

Fortunately I have a friend, a real buddy, who can understand this kind of enthusiasm just as well as my more typical and habitual moans and groans. The effort required to put love into practice and lead a meaningful life becomes insignificant when I realize how spoiled I am with the comfort and consolation of a person like him.

PERFECTLY ALL RIGHT

To be natural and “go with the flow”
whichever mood-swing happens to be in force,
that's an appealing modus vivendi,
a sensible way of coping with the world.

Not to dawdle or hurry, but take my time.
I like the idea of mastering my thoughts,
of getting brainwaves down on paper
with a kind of sanity that always returns.

It's great to be awake, grand to be sober
and to relish the challenges of this day.

I'm lucky to have a mind that works
and a handful of faithful readers.

IMPORTANT DECISIONS

I decide to be in a good mood.

I decide to be friendly.

I decide to be helpful.

I decide to listen to people.

I decide to think positively.

I decide to enjoy myself.

I decide to focus on Love.

I decide to be spiritual.

I decide to have a good day.

BROTHER MICHAEL'S PRAYER

Lord, be the guide of my hands and feet,
Let me meet whom you want me to meet.
Tell me the truths you want me to say
And keep me from getting in your way.

B. M. lost in WTC tragedy 2001



KY

Kuan Yin simply and sweetly

sits there saying

“Put all your trust in me.”

Sweetest Angel

Grant me, I pray

a hassle-free day

of happy sobriety

with love and gratitude

along the way.

PROSTRATION

I dedicate this day to you, Amida
and to your handmaiden Kuan Yin.

No other dharma equals or excels
that of your wisdom and compassion.
Even the plants and trees listen to you.

Grant me the blessings of satori and
sobriety as I prostrate before you, an
acolyte lost in the mists of illusion.

Take away my doubt and hesitation
and make this an Amida-minded day!

THE GREAT DAY AHEAD

Sweet joy, come into my soul
and fill me with your blissful warmth.

Kuan Yin wants me to be happy,
Kuan Yin bestows on me her grace.

The woes of morning now depart.
Hope is here, and with it gentle trust.
Thank you for the great day ahead,
I'll meet its inviting challenges.

This prayer is composed with love
for my faithful wife Maria.

All's well in the state of Denmark.
Courage, cholo, and keep rowing!

LOTUS FLOWERS

You who are all goodness and outgoing love beyond human comprehension, shine your light into my troubled mind and dispel the gloom with which my day has begun.

Even as I utter this prayer I start to feel the warmth of your compassion coursing through my veins. Years, months, days, hours and moments of devotion to you and your buddha dharma now pay off their dividend.

With firm composure I stand here, both feet on the ground, looking up at the early morning sky. This has all the makings of a day like no other, for out of the mudpool of suffering the lotus flowers of joy and gratitude now bloom.

HEARER OF CRIES

Blessèd Kuan Yin, guardian angel of my tiny universe, lodestar of my imagination, be with me in stillness as I set out on the adventure of this new day.

Take me under your protective mantle and shield me from my own destructive thoughts. Gently lead me forth out of the benighted maze in which my mind is trapped.

Hearer of cries, bodhisattva of compassion, shed your silver light into the dark corners of my soul. Cleanse my brain and gladden my heart in readiness for action.

In deep humility and gratitude I lay my life at your lotus feet, surrendering every vestige of self-will to your all-embracing wisdom.

Together we can transform the uncertain hours ahead into a miraculous statement of sobriety.

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Come into my life today, Kuan Yin. Reality, as I sometimes call it, is desperately daunting. Even the peeling of Maria's kiwi can pose insurmountable problems.

What I think I need, fairest of goddesses, is for you to cast your graceful spell on the furniture of my existence. Happening to be a poet, I find relief in written words. Give me an abundant supply of nuts and bolts to put my morning together.

We know full well that Mister Booze would gladly have us back in his insane world of shining whisky bottles and well-staffed psychiatric wards ... that our defence must come from a power greater than ourselves.

You are that power for me, Kuan Yin, surprising me and comforting me in a thousand little ways. Sometimes you answer my prayers before I have even uttered them. Remove what I do not need: excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity and foolish decisions. A gentle acceptance and a willingness to follow your guidance are all I ask.

KUAN YIN AT WORK

Namu Kuan Shih Yin P'u-Sa. You are safe. You are protected. Nothing can go seriously wrong. You have a programme which works. Positive things are coming your way. You are awake and drinking your tea. From now on it's just a question of showing up.

I accept. I accept this day and everything it brings.
I stretch my hands out to you for help and guidance.

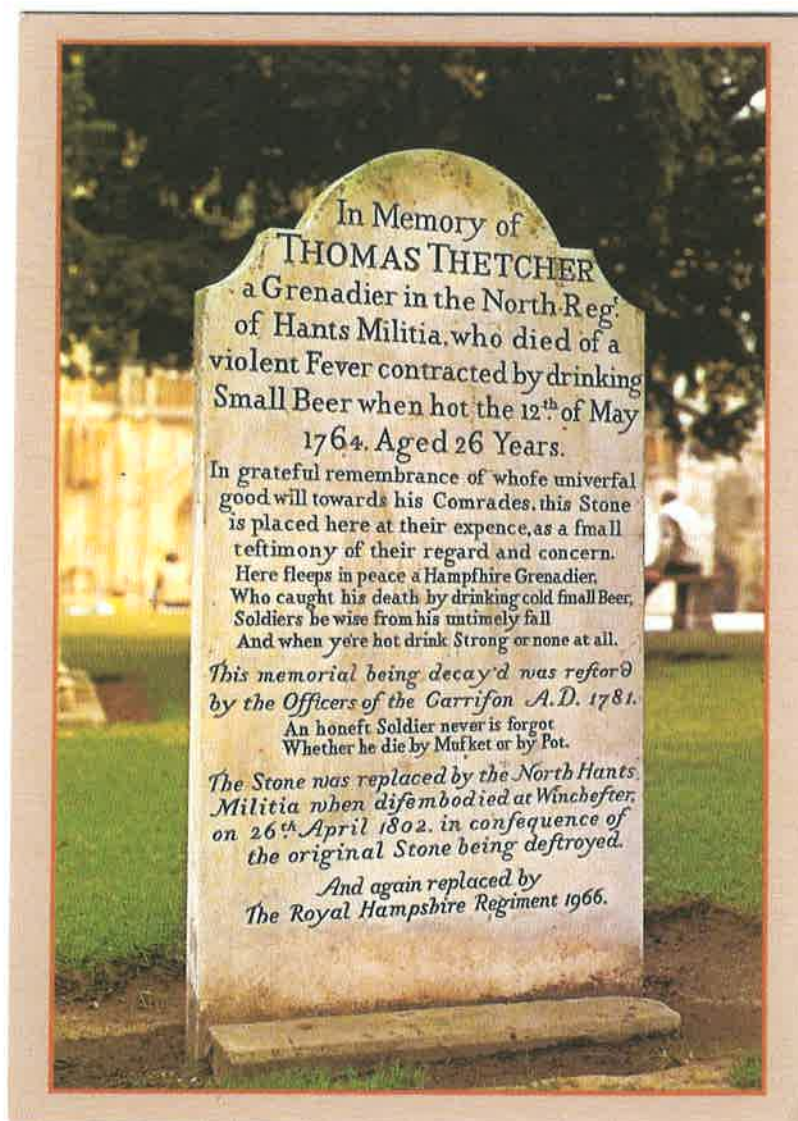
I'm glad I'm alive. I'm glad I'm sober. I'm glad I have friends I can turn to when in difficulty . I'm grateful for Maria, my loving wife. I will make an effort to deal with practicalities, leaving the results to you.

Pictured in the mind, Kuan Yin in all her maiden beauty banishes aversion, lust, resentment and fear, making every task lighter, rendering the heart joyously serene.

“Wherever you go, and whoever you meet, love and peace await you in abundance. So rejoice and be glad, for in my Land everything is possible.”

Buddha adds: I WILL STAND BY YOU ALL DAY.
That's a new angle, fresh light on the proceedings.
I buy that, I can take it on board.

“I am always here
to protect you,” says Kuan Yin
with a blissful smile.



As long as I stay off the booze today
and entrust in Amida's Primal Vow
there will be nothing to worry about.

AN ALCOHOLIC'S PRAYER

Lord, watch over this alcoholic. Be thou my Higher Power as I strive towards recovery. Permit me to lean on you for strength and guidance. Grant that I may become totally honest about my problem. Touch my soul and spark my spirit into awareness, Lord, that I may see the value of a sober life. Show me the glory of the dawn and a new day and the reward of a sunset and a day well lived. Help me to deal with resentments, Lord, the real curse of the alcoholic. Take from me all hatred, anger and wilfulness and persuade me to work towards emotional health and maturity, that I may fully enjoy the blessings of respectability. In thy mercy, Lord, see fit to remove my cravings for that which will destroy me, alcohol. Keep me ever mindful that alone I am unable to maintain a happy sobriety. Bring me ever close to you and to those who will help me along the way. Most of all prompt me to extend my hand to the alcoholic who still suffers, so that through him or her I may find you and continued sobriety.

Brought to England by a friend of Bill W. from a prison in North Africa in the spring of 1983.

AFFIRMATIONS

Just for today I will not pick up an alcoholic drink or think an alcoholic thought.

I am grateful for the night that is past and for another 24 hours in which to exercise my creativity.

This is the day I have lived for. I choose to be happy.

I will combat lethargy, loneliness and fear with an impish grin.

Amida has not brought me this far in order to dump me on the slag-heap of gloom and despair.

I am precious, special and unique – one of His kids.

This day is a gift, I welcome opportunities for growth and change.

I adopt a mood of joyous adventure, a willingness to launch out and take risks.

Everybody has the right to be wrong. I am everybody.

I apply the balm of forgiveness to myself, for real or imaginary hurts, and light the fire of cosmic love in my own heart.

Other Power intervenes when I suddenly realize Amida is doing for me what I could not do for myself.

Sobriety is a gift I will pass on lovingly to the next alcoholic I meet.

HAPPINESS, MY DUTY!

Lord, thank you for my sobriety. Of all the gifts you have bestowed upon me over the years, it is the most precious. I treasure the new life you have given me. I was doomed to alcoholic insanity. I couldn't have survived without your drastic, loving intervention. My dreams of glory at the bar and the nightmares of my past have now faded away and been replaced by quiet self-confidence in today and by unlimited gratitude to you for the freedom I now enjoy.

Stand by me through the coming hours, O Divine Master, make your will known to me as far as possible, take away my fear and hesitation, grant me the courage to act in accordance with my conscience. Allow me to draw upon your unlimited reserves of energy and love, and remind me when I stray to far from the golden mean, that honest effort is more important than perfection; for you accept me as I am – a recovering alcoholic with a duty to be happy, and to share that happiness with others.

WHATEVER HAPPENS

Somebody said something one morning,
which I found hard to believe at the time,
it seemed an unrealistic claim:

“I know that, whatever happens,
I won't pick up a drink today.”

But I came to agree with him and found,
in his words, courage and peace of mind
to see me through the whole day ahead.

THE GATELESS GATE

“As we go through the day we pause when agitated or doubtful and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day ‘Thy will be done.’”

Sometimes my morning blues, aggravated by a bad night’s sleep, are too heavy to be cured by three cups of strong tea. What then? A sob on a ladyfriend’s shoulder? An e-mail to an ever-willing Kris? No, surely the way is through the Gateless Gate of prayer and meditation, as pointed out in the Eleventh Step of our wonderful program, where we pray only for “the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

I am certain that God, *as I understand him*, wants me to be “happy, joyous and free”. A justifiable pride in my poetic achievements; contentment with my family life; and the determination to overcome the present downward swing – these are the things he wants me to experience right now.

I drop what I am doing and go into the kitchen where, surrounded by the accoutrements of tea-drinking and many other delightful things, I feel at peace with myself and the world. I no longer tire myself out with self-defeating rumination. He understands the “double trouble” by which I am afflicted and is working on the cure. Maria will be down before long. My heart leaps up at the thought of this new day.

STEP THREE PRAYER

Many of us said to our Maker, *as we understood Him*:

“God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!”

STEP SEVEN PRAYER

When ready, we say something like this:

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.”

THE PROMISES

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity, and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not! They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

STEP ELEVEN

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace – that where there is hatred, I may bring love – that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness – that where there is discord, I may bring harmony – that where there is error, I may bring truth – that where there is doubt, I may bring faith – that where there is despair, I may bring hope – that where there are shadows, I may bring light – that where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted – to understand, than to be understood – to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.

HUMILITY

On his desk, Dr. Bob had a plaque defining humility:

“Perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble.

It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.”

GREAT SPIRIT

Grant me true humility, that I may respect
and revere all sentient beings.

Show me the beauty of rocks, plants, trees,
animals and flowers.

Teach me, through the messages they radiate,
to be compassionate towards my fellows.

May I find peace and harmony in my surroundings.

I will tune my ears to the sound of your voice
and fearlessly walk the path you have prepared
for me.

I could not wish for a better world than this one.



SMILE

Radiant Buddha

Jewel of the Universe

Enlighten my day

With your miraculous smile

Of infinite compassion.

Nothing can compare
with the joy of knowing
one will be born
in the Land of Bliss.

ALEGRIA

As I start this new day (this new *life*, better said)
relieve me of my oppressive sense of inadequacy.

Remind me that I am a fully paid up member
of the universe, whose existence brings joy to others.

I am glad to be sober and grateful to be alive.

I will learn to take the rough with the smooth.

Allow me to draw upon your strength and guidance.

I will do my very best to be serene and cheerful.

JOY OF THE DHARMA

For some of us, perpetual underlying worry
was an actual way of living.

Let it be said tonight, when I lay down my pen,
that this was a day to remember.

Let it be said that Joy of the Dharma was effortless
and Love was its own reward.

Let my nembutsu be uttered with the wide eyes
and trusting heart of a child.

Let this day unfold, with my willing approval,
in exactly the way it wants to.

Let these expectations not exceed their limits.
Let my gratitude be expressed in loving deeds.

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Right View

Right Aim

Right Speech

Right Action

Right Living

Right Effort

Right Mindfulness

Right Contemplation

TATHAGATA CARES

One way of understanding
“Namo Amida Butsu” is to hear
the Buddha of Light and Life
speaking to us through his Name
with compassionate reassurance.

“Namo Amida Butsu – It's ME!

Whether you are aware of me or not,
I am with you in every room of your house
and on all the streets of this city.

Night and day you are in my thoughts.

Your mere existence benefits humanity,

You are not required to prove yourself.

Whatever you do is good in my sight.

I need you as much as you need me.

Feeling good is a form of the nembutsu.

It sends a wave of love into the world.”

COMPLETE ABANDON

Today I place my life in your hands, Amida, and surrender to your will with complete abandon. Your plan for me in the coming hours is infinitely wiser than anything I could think up for myself. Therefore I will get in tune with you, putting a real effort into being useful and unselfish. I will sacrifice some of my “valuable time” for the benefit of somebody else. But I will not place the bar so high that I cannot jump over it.

Grant me confidence and freedom from guilt, that I may act in a self-forgetting spirit. I’ll write something worthwhile today and share it with someone I love. I’ll be kind to myself and cultivate a winning smile. I’ll enjoy times of solitude but treasure the company of other people. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision. I will trust others and refrain from calculation.

Starting now, I will make the most of this day. I will listen to criticism but not allow myself to be upset by it. With your help I will become totally honest about my problem. I will “express truth”, admitting my wrongs to you, to myself and to another human being. I will focus on the here and now, doing what is in front of me and enjoying the present moment. I will open myself to growth and change.

There is more goodness in me than I realize. I draw down my Golden Sun and let it shine for all to see.

UNHINDERED PATH

“We are in the effort department,” said Charles, “the results are up to Him.” I am fortified by the vitamins I have absorbed during recent meetings. Watching the faces of my friends and listening to them share, I can no longer indulge in self-pity. I will perpetuate these happy memories moment by moment throughout the morning, determined to let go of doubt and indecision.

The mist of fear & soul-sickness lifts as I am embraced by the Tathagata’s boundless compassion. Joys difficult to imagine are in store for me later in the day. But first I must come to life. I will probably make mistakes, but they are the price I am willing to pay for freedom of choice and the unconditional desire to help others. I will no longer shelter behind the smokescreen of perfection. I now intend to act on the plane of inspiration, switching to automatic pilot & following good orderly directions.

Place my feet on the Unhindered Path, freeing me from calculation and conceptual thought. Be my counsellor and guide. I long to see you more clearly and worship you more dearly. Assisted by Kuan Yin and countless bodhisattvas of wisdom and compassion, encouraged by Shinran and the Great Masters, I will give this morning my best shot.

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FREEDOM

The highest goal we can strive for
is to become totally unselfish and
other directed.

Namo Amida Butsu

Let's make it a sober day
Free from manic depression
And alcoholic thinking.

Namo Amida Butsu

Take away my bad karma,
Not an order – a request.
Make my path simple & straight.

Namo Amida Butsu

Is the only way I know
To escape delusion's maze,
Find meaning in existence.

Namo Amida Butsu

I cannot say it enough -
Free me from self-centredness
And guide me through this day.

ON THE FLOOR

“You stretch on the floor, begging me for help - and I give you María. What more could you want?”

I am *Namo Amida Butsu*, prostrated here in complete abandon. Amida and I are one.

Everything I do today will be meaningful, symbolic, loving. Gratitude will be the keynote.

I am dependent on a Power greater than myself, *God as I understand Him*.

My left hand depends on my right hand, and my right hand is Amida. In him I trust.

There is a song they used to sing: “Don't worry, be happy!” Well, the singer is Amida.

As I turn my thoughts to him, the interference in my head fades out, and I am healed.

DELIVER ME

Deliver me, Amida, from the two main *rational* fears: the fear of not getting that which I long for; and the fear of losing that which I already have.

Free me, too, from the unnecessary *irrational* fears of failure, criticism and being found out. I have a congenital fear of punishment and ostracism.

Remove all guilt feelings from my conscience.
I wish to be always open, friendly and spontaneous.
Let your liberating light shine into my heart.

I here ask you for one more thing, Amida, for me alone. May I come to know and venerate you better and better each day, in every possible way.

BUGABOOS

“How is it, Amida, that some days we are the closest of buddies and others we seem to nod at one another from a great distance, through a cloud of unknowing? It must surely have something to do with self-centredness and sloppy thinking on my part. Please step in and remove these bugaboos that block the channel between us. Wrap me snugly in the compassion of your Primal Vow and let me not wriggle out of it. Whatever mood I may be in, whatever degree of apathy or self-pity engulfs me, however unwilling I am to respond to good orderly directions, finally give me vision and restore me to sanity. I herewith entrust my whole life to your care.”

“It’s in the nature of things for you, at times, to feel unenlightened, lonely and separated from me. That is the fundamental cause of your malaise. And that’s what I have given you the *nembutsu* for – to serve as a living link between your limited unhappy ego and my glorious infinitude. If I have one wish, it is that you should enjoy every moment of your waking life. When you are in your grey cloud you deny the compassionate feelings I constantly harbour for you. I am *Oyasama*, your father and mother before they were born. You cannot do wrong in my sight, for I will always see you as an innocent child. Your thoughts are entirely acceptable.”

JOYFUL HEART

Namo Amida Butsu! I am entirely ready for you to remove the dubious pleasure of my morning blues. I realize that indulgence in apathy and indifference gets me nowhere. I will adopt a joyous and creative attitude towards my day, seeing that the light comes from you. I am willing to accept life on life's terms and to make the most of each precious moment.

I come to you with a glad and thankful heart. The power of your Primal Vow encourages me to do selfless things today. That feeling of uselessness and self pity will disappear. Inform my thinking and reveal your presence in everything I see. Sustain my efforts to rise above despondency. Make it a sober day, in which I take firm steps towards my recovery.

I light this candle before your sacred image, believing that our hearts will be united in its flame. Only by living a life completely free from depression will I learn to dedicate my energy to others. I humbly ask you to remove this handicap in the time and manner of your choice. Give me a little push now and then. I need more of that willingness and trust which come from you.

EQUANIMITY

Come into my life today
and manage my affairs,
for I am powerless without you.

Let me be loving, cheerful,
considerate and friendly to all.

Open my eyes to the merits of others,
that I may learn from their goodness.

Grant me peace of mind,
equanimity, resolution
and the courage to do things
without complaining.

Give me a grateful heart
that I may see the signs
of your love and compassion
everywhere.

REPEATING THE NAME

Just go on quietly saying your nembutsu,
while the blackbird sings its song in the garden,
a succulent pear between your fingers and thumb.
Namo Amida Butsu, Namo Amida Butsu . . .
This practice opens for you the Pure Land gate,
gently increases your store of happiness and joy.

No matter if Confucius attempts to confuse you
with questions like “What is coming into the room?”
and the teachers of Tarot and Kundalini advise you
not to give vital energy to the opposite sex -
just go on saying it in spite of all annoyances,
an electricity bill, a grouch, an unpleasant mood.

Haste and fear are among the diseases of our time,
weapons which Mara the Tempter uses against us.
Action and inaction battle against one another,
the path gets lost, there is no light on the question.
Be resolute, and forge ahead with the utterance
strongly recommended by the Masters of our school.

All manner of things shall be well, wrote T.S. Eliot,
wisely exercising his poetic and prophetic gifts.
And nothing indeed can bar the progress of the person
who resolutely walks the unhindered Pure Land path,
calling Amida's name ten or ten thousand times a day
because there is nothing more truthful and real to say.

Hearing the call

Namo Amida Butsu -

Amida calls me

from the Land of Bliss.



衆生咸知如電光 隨其善惡去即无常
慈悲觀音淨得品 念而慈眉信極好
捨施淨財成其信 之財雖成無終好
惟願三善生淨定 三善竟獲上天喜
明末歲次戊午歲七月十五日早初記

德壽
中區辰有戊子

MANAGING NICELY

Whatever the time or weather,
be brave and give thanks
that you are alive and sober.

However you understand Him,
God has given you this day
for a purpose He will reveal.

Let go all doubts and fears
about your ability to cope
with unexpected situations.

Simply focus on the here and now
and you will be shown what to do.

Remember: your task is to feel good.

TRUST

I will now strive to be my bright and cheerful self,
free from the bondage of morning blues.

Show me your plan of action for today and help me to
put it into effect, combatting egoism and self-indulgence
with the sharp sword of detachment.

Grant me a liberal measure of self-confidence, faith in
the working of your Primal Vow and trust in the
inherent goodness of other people.

I will not balk at imaginary difficulties, but take them
resolutely in my stride, knowing you are always there
to catch me when I stumble.

I have no other goal in life than to make this a sober
day. Only recovering alcoholics will know the meaning
I attach to this word.

Trusting in your wisdom and compassion, remembering
that you have never let me down, I relish the challenges
and opportunities the coming hours will bring.

ALTERED ATTITUDES

Here comes a meditation on the need for brightening up my attitude towards the hours ahead.

With the help of tasty morning tea, all my energy is devoted to installing a positive programme in my head.

I now spend a few moments anticipating the joys which await me. My fear of people has gone. My trusted immediate surroundings fill me with a sense of wonder.

Relaxing my rigid outlook I smile at the man reflected in the window. The photos on the sill smile back.

*This is the day which the Lord hath made;
I will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Feelings of guilt and self pity are no longer welcome in my soul. I walk the broad highway to recovery, Amida going before me to smooth the way.

I am happy to be myself, a separate single person with a significant role to play on the stage of life.

Have I not come a long way indeed for this heavenly morning to arise in my consciousness?

REQUESTS

Make me ever and always grateful for the gift of life, fully conscious of your presence in every breath.

Remove my aversion to reality and remind me that I am on this planet for a good purpose.

Take away my resentment towards situations in general and people in particular.

Let me bear in mind that fear and dislike of my fellow men are the worst evils that can overcome me.

Empty my soul completely of jealousy, hate and bitterness towards others.

Teach me to live in perfect harmony with my surroundings.

Help me to spread happiness around me and grant me a whole day free from alcoholic thinking.

THE Nth DAY

This is the *n*th day of my life and I have decided it will be the best.

Success in this venture will depend largely on my ability to conquer aversion.

I have a body and a mind, thank God, both of which function reasonably well.

Hot water gushes miraculously out of the shower to splash me with pleasure.

Food awaits me on the breakfast table, brought by willing hands from far-off lands.

The telephone rings and the person I hoped it would be is there with good news.

Suddenly it occurs to me that not thinking I know better than God is one good definition of humility.

I stop what I am doing and listen with the full force of my personality to the voice of my Inner Child.

With unfailing accuracy he/she/it pinpoints the problem and comes up with a perfect solution.

Surrender is the first step on the path of spiritual progress.

FEELING GOOD

“My mind is calm, contented, warm, alert and alive. I think whatever I want to think. I know how to be positive.”

“My body is young, active, supple, beautiful and free. I take it wherever I want to go. It's my personal ambassador.”

“I feel wonderful, or certainly will do in a short space of time. I am at peace with the world and in harmony with my surroundings.”

Getting myself fast on the feel-good frequency, I say: “I am receiving now. I am receiving all the good in my life, now. I am receiving happiness and good health, now.”

A sensation of well-being steals over me as I ponder these words. I am filled to the brim with love and gratitude for my existence on this planet.

MOOD

I will be good-tempered and cheerful.

I will be optimistic and think positively.

I will get off the pity-pot. Immediately.

I will be grateful for my sobriety.

I will adopt a joyous attitude to my day.

I will find ways to be helpful and loving.

I will watch what the hands are doing.

I will not take myself too damn seriously.

I will accept my bi-polarity with love.

This is the beginning of a good day,

not the end of a bad night.

WILLINGNESS

From deep within, bring up a bare minimum of willingness. Make a conscious effort towards your recovery. Stretch your mind a few millimetres and let the soft contours of a smile replace that blank gaze. “We are in the effort department,” said Charles, “The results are up to Him.” Remember, too, that all prayer is eventually answered.

This too shall pass – as Maria is fond of saying. And as it does pass, 101 enjoyable little things will come to mind. Kuan Yin, hearer of cries is here to help you climb aboard a higher cloud. Everything is much easier and more enjoyable than you think. A calm acceptance of your manic-depression and a selfless going-along with things could be the answer to your problems.

Follow Good Orderly Directions and if necessary give yourself a hard kick in the butt. Intercept negative thoughts as they arise and dispatch them with a karate chop. Don’t let stinking thinking – Mr. Booze’s chief ally – clutter up valuable space in your mind. *Alle negatieve gedachten dadelijk doden!* as Omer often said on Friday afternoons.

If your brain still refuses to function, reach out for one of the inspirational books on your shelf and find out what a well-trained mind has to say about it from a different angle. Entrust yourself to the working of Amida’s Primal Vow – and you will come to realize that He is doing for you what you could not do for yourself.

THE EFFORT DEPARTMENT

These prayers and meditations should steel the will and lead to joyful action, undertaken with love and self-confidence. One day at a time, one step at a time, one piece of fruit at a time, the impossible will take shape. Aversion to reality is no more than a passing illusion.

What will I make of my day? Will I stare lifelessly at the clouds and rain, bemoaning my fate? Or will I take a grip, pull myself together, make the mental “click”? Only a tiny step separates apathy from courage, and it is in me to take it.

I hereby let go of morbid rumination and head towards the kitchen, a sanctuary of peace and prayer where one or two useful little things can be done. Perhaps a teapot will smile at me, a bowl want rinsing, a plate need putting away. Movement helps me to recover.

I will now try easing myself very slowly and gently into action, making an absolute minimum of effort.

This is no ordinary day. I command that it be filled with love and respect, I decree that it sparkle with adventure. One decides to be cheerful, one chooses to be glum. Food for thought!

I now propose a banquet of innocent delights in which I lose that sense of guilt once and for all. First and foremost I will give thanks for being here to say these words, thanks for the friends I am lucky enough to have, thanks for my health and sobriety.

I face my day with hope and certainty, aware that what little I am able to do is to your glory. Give me strength, as I go out from here, to do your will.

NIGHTSONG

Before going to bed I sit down quietly for a few minutes and take stock of the day that is now past. It has been a day without alcohol, and that makes it a day worth remembering. It has also been a day free of depression, which is an amazing fact for me. In a thousand small ways God has shown me His mercy and lovingly guided me from moment to moment.

I have enjoyed this day, which is reason enough for thinking that, in the main, I have done God's will. I received a lot of help, without which my day would have been unmanageable, and in turn I was able to help others. I admit : at times my levels of perception were low and I reacted sluggishly. Could I have performed better, under the circumstances?

I now trade in this day in exchange for a few hours' precious sleep. Its ephemeral glory will shortly pass away and it will be numbered with countless others in the records of eternity. Guilt, fear and disappointment I turn over to God, ready to face the night with a clear conscience.

Whatever the dawn may bring, and I ask Him for clarity, I have lived this day to the full and nobody can take my happiness away.

GOOD NIGHT!

Thank you, Amida, for another day of happy sobriety.

Thank you for all the people in my life and especially ...

Thank you also for 101 little ways in which you have done for me what I could not have done for myself.

I hope to “wake up and get up” with your Name on my lips, grateful for the gift of a new day.

Let me quickly overcome any discomfort the morning may bring and always seek to do your will in a spirit of true humility.

May all my yesterdays be dreams of happiness and all my tomorrows visions of hope.

On awakening, I will take the bull by the horns, knowing that you have wonderful things in store for me.