

## Rediscovering the Lost Art of Blessing by Karen Horneffer Ginter

□ In his book, “To Bless the Space Between Us,” John O’Donohue describes an experience he had when he was a young priest visiting a group of nuns. He was asked by one of the older women to offer her a blessing. After he finished, he knelt down in front of her, and similarly asked her for a blessing. She was completely taken aback by this because, apparently, no one had ever asked her for such a thing.

□ It’s odd to live in a world where some people, but not all people, feel worthy of offering blessings. To change this inequity, O’Donohue encourages all of us to rediscover our power to bless one another.

□ I’ve become enchanted with this invitation, regardless of whether we define a blessing as being a wish or a prayer, whether we conceive it as coming from us or through us, or whether we offer blessings through what we say, write, or think. In any of these forms, the act of blessing another contains several irresistible qualities.

□ First, blessings are empowering because they connect us to our capacity to offer good to the world through simple thoughts and actions. They also provide us with a constructive way to redirect our thoughts and emotions, which might otherwise get channeled into worry, frustration, or self-absorption. Our concern for our child can be held in a blessing: “May this situation work out for you.” Our frustration at work can fuel a thought: “May this situation find harmony.”

□ When we find ourselves consumed with our own predicament, we can expand our thinking by offering blessings to others who might be involved in similar situations: “May we all find resolution and clarity.” Such shifts in our awareness can help us to broaden our patterns of thinking so that we don’t get caught up in a tight web of repetitive and consuming thoughts.

□ When we find ourselves responding to numerous requests for money and time, it’s also helpful to have ways of initiating acts of generosity. When we don’t have time to do this by engaging in “random acts of kindness,” offering blessings gives us something we can do in no time at all—just by thinking a positive thought about someone else. Allowing our attention to move outside of ourselves can be a refreshing change when we feel overwhelmed by all that’s on our to-do list.

□ Thinking such thoughts is useful in times when we wish we could be helpful, but there’s nothing we can do. It helps to remind us that we can always, at least, offer a wish to the person or situation in need. We can also develop a habit of offering blessings to people we pass by or interact with, as a way of regularly turning our thoughts toward compassion. Our wish, on their behalf, can be quite simple: “May you find fulfillment in

your work,” “May your travels be safe.” We can also write out such blessings to loved ones just as we might tuck a note inside of our child’s lunch box: “May you find unexpected joy today,” “May you always know how much I love you.”

□It’s fun to be creative with our blessings by finding small objects—maybe a heart or a fall leaf—which symbolize our wish, or writing our words on something interesting, like a stone. We should also consider including ourselves in our blessings, possibly starting the day with a kind thought: “May I feel peaceful and happy today.”

□The more we offer such blessings to ourselves and to others, the more contagious it becomes to water these seeds of kindness and generosity in our own mind and heart, and in the world around us.