

I love you, I love you, I love you.

'February Fill Dyke' is a painting by Benjamin Williams Leader (1881). It depicts a typical wet, winter scene. Flooded dykes; cold days; weak and watery sunsets. This painting speaks well of how we can feel in February. This mid-winter month can be a time of real bleakness. The cold and damp can move stealthily into our bones and the lack of sunshine can really affect our mood.

I have felt a little dampness creep into my spiritual bones too these last few weeks and this has brought a sense of distraction to my prayers.

I am sure that this is due to the fact there seems to be lots going on

– exams to mark, reports to write, and meetings to attend as well as all that us involved with being a busy mum. Just like the fields in Leader's painting, life has become a little saturated and I feel unsettled.

If we ever felt unhappy or unsettled as children, my mum would sing to us:



Keep your sunny side up, up.
Let the laughter shine through, do
Stand up on your legs;
be like two fried eggs;
Keep your sunny side up.

I loved it when she did and even just remembering this can bring me a sense of the brightness that I am longing for. It brings a touch of hope. And hope is a beautiful quality.

In his book 'Words of Hope and Healing,' Henri Nouwen tells us:

The voice of Jesus says, "Come, come let me wipe away your tears and let my mouth come close to your ear and say to you, 'I love you, I love you, I love you.'"

In her desire to cheer us up, my mum was saying to us, 'I love you, I love you, I love you.' As she wrapped her arms around us, wiped away our tears and sang softly into our ears, she was reminding us of a better way to feel. That she was there with us and for us. How much closer can you come to the Word that became flesh and dwells among us? My learning heart is beginning to trust that I will be comforted somehow when I acknowledge and accept how I am feeling. That my unsettled feelings, and my distractions can cause me to be chased into God and stilled by God and to be filled with peace. It is precisely when life seems at its fullest that I need to regain some time in solitude and bring to mind those memories and experiences which will make me smile and bring me healing.

These last few weeks of the winter evenings could be an invitation to pray in a different, more relaxed way. To give yourself the space to hear and feel the comforting presence of Jesus telling you, 'I love you, I love you, I love you.' See it as a time to focus more clearly on the fact that we experience God in all the moments of our lives. Yes in all of them and most powerfully when we use our senses as a way of praying.

You could really use your imagination to help you to do this e.g. by giving yourself the permission to sit on the sofa and snuggle up close to someone you love; by listening to some music and letting it fill your very being; by lighting a fire and really feeling the heat touch your body; by wrapping up and taking a walk in the crisp, cold air; by sitting and really resting in God's beautiful and tender love that is all around you. Eyes and ears open, senses awakened, memory rekindled, hearts high.

Your love, O lord, is before my eyes. (Psalm 25)