

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 21st November – Letter to a Young Heart

Dear Child,

Let nobody ever own you. You are too precious to be possessed by anyone or anything. Only God is big enough for you. You really are the love-child of Life, fashioned from the desire of a divine heart, the energy of the stars and the human love of two people, we, your parents. Never forget your amazing heritage.

Remember the invincible power that is within you. With God there is nothing you cannot achieve. Take charge of your own life. You do not need anyone to complete you. You are already complete. Those who love you will reveal that to you. Be nobody's victim. Remember your origin and your destiny. Let no one disrespect you, dominate you, take away your freedom, make you feel guilty – whether these be politicians, family, neighbours, church leaders. Keep your self-esteem always high.

Know how to protect yourself. You have a mystery about you that must be carefully nurtured. Guard it safely. Do not let your sails out too freely to the wayward winds. Do not trust the wrong people with your deepest secrets. May you always discern the falsehood and lies in those who pretend to love you.

Learn to love yourself – all of yourself. Many people think they are not 'good enough'. They are dissatisfied, resentful. While you are still young, let nothing bitter take root in your heart. Learn to be gentle and patient with yourself, to know yourself, to believe in yourself. You are, after all, the beloved image of God.

Make sure you have a soul-friend, your own anam-chara. This is a person who will never deceive or betray you, who desires only what is best for you. Your soul-friend will listen to you, will weep and laugh with you, but will not be fooled by you. Your soul-friend will always keep reminding you to be your own authentic self.

Allow yourself to dream. It is God's own dream incarnate in your heart. Hold on to your childhood vision. You will lose it; make wrong choices. Take responsibility for your actions. The vision will be restored to you, again and again. Befriend your angel. Light the candle. Say the prayer.

Give yourself permission to make mistakes. There is no other way to grow. Forgive yourself and others – easily and often. It is not weak to say 'I'm sorry'. You will be condemned, especially when you tell your truth. Try to accept, and even love, your own shadows and vulnerability. This is not easy.

Allow yourself to have joy. You were created for it. Do not feel guilty about seeking your own fulfilment. Some people become too serious too soon. Learn to laugh, especially at yourself; to play, to wonder. That is why Jesus asked each of us to become as a child, to stay youthful – just like you are.

Believe in your own ability, in your unique beauty, in the radiance of God that you carry. Some people are full of a strange self-hatred. Do not forget to be proud of who you are, to want to be nobody else. At your baptism you were anointed prophetess, priestess, princess and proprietress of the Holy Spirit. Every Mass remembers and celebrates that Christening.

You will be tempted in many ways. Even Jesus was. There are controlling people and systems all around you. There will be enormous pressure on you to conform your daily habits and life-style to passing trends and shallow ideals. Trust your inner wisdom to discern how to be true to yourself. But find a good teacher too.

Learn to accept the strange darkness that is part of the human condition. This is a slow and painful lesson. Without some form of suffering you will never be free. It is, in fact, impossible to be a truly loving human being without experiencing much sorrow. All your best living and loving will be a kind of dying too.

The art of letting go is a precious secret, a habit of the heart you must make second-nature to you. There is a stress and anxiety that drain people's energy. They worry about the past; they worry about the future. Not many live in the present moment. It is the only place to blossom, the only place you can become the light you are called to spread, the blessing you are called to be.

As a child you now love the morning sun, the evening shadows and the stars at night. All of nature loves you. Our earth is your mother, but now she needs your protection. Lots of people are destroying her through greed and carelessness. Always treat her with respect and love. Honour her in every way. Like you, she too, is God's body.

There is a way of seeing into the heart of everything, and of recognising there the shimmering light of God. Heaven is always disguised as ordinary life. This secret will give you a depth and a resonance to keep your heart pure, your eyes shining, your friends true, and every moment a miracle.

Your inner child is now your closest friend – your very self. Cherish her as your divine guide. Do not betray her. Her horizon is never limited, her vision never closed. She does not follow others' paths; she creates her own path for others to follow – the only path that goes all the way home.

When you get older and look for work, try to choose what you love. Too many people hate what they do. Their quality of life is deeply damaged. Even in times of recession, it is still important not to settle for less, for the first job on offer. Never compromise on your principles. Channel your passion into your chosen career.

And always remember, dearest child, you are not alone. You will never be alone. The angels of our love will always be on your shoulder. Carry this letter in your heart. Please stay connected to us. Live a wonderful life. Mom and Dad xx

(From a parish bulletin)