

The Guest House

(A story adapted by Chaplain Donnel from a poem by Jellaludin Rumi)

1. This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

But sometimes this guest house can also feel like a haunted house visited by ghosts

When the ghost of sorrows comes, it violently sweeps your house empty of its furniture.

2. Then there's the ghost of dark thoughts, the ghost of shame, the ghost of anger, the ghost of malice.

Then the ghost of fear, the ghost of anxiety, the ghost of grief: we suspect that if we welcome these guests - they might overstay. We suspect that if we welcome these guests, they might never leave.

3. But deep sacred wisdom reminds us that like seasons, these visitors are impermanent and transitory. The stormy weather, after all, does eventually pass.

A wise teacher from Persia once said these words about these visiting guests: "Still, treat each guest honorably. The guest may be clearing you out for some new delight. Welcome and entertain them all! Meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond."

4. WONDERING QUESTIONS

I WONDER WHAT RESONATED WITH YOU ABOUT THE STORY? WHAT DID YOU FIND TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART?

I WONDER WHICH PART OF THIS STORY IS ABOUT YOU? WHERE ARE YOU IN THE STORY?

I WONDER IF YOU HAVE COME ACROSS SOMETHING CLOSE TO THIS?

I WONDER IF YOU HAVE HAD MOMENTS WHEN YOU HAD UNEXPECTED VISITORS? GHOSTS OF SORRY, DARK THOUGHTS, SHAME AND MALICE?

HOW ABOUT GHOSTS OF FEAR, ANXIETY and GRIEF?

I WONDER IF YOU'VE HAD MOMENTS WHEN YOU FELT LIKE THE GUESTS OVERSTAYED?

I WONDER IF YOU'VE HAD MOMENTS WHEN YOU FELT LIKE THE GUESTS MIGHT NEVER LEAVE?

I WONDER IF, AS WISDOM SUGGESTED, THE GUESTS LEFT, LIKE A PASSING STORM?

SORROW

SHAME

MALICE

FEAR

ANXIETY

ANGER

GRIEF