

**Words of Yes, By Mary Lanning:**

**A collection of Mary's unedited and unpublished words**

*Read at St Andrew's on Good Friday*

Observation on Thanksgiving Night—  
a late night.  
New York City streets.  
Pile after pile of large black plastic bags.  
Throw-away remnants of extravagant feasting.  
Scattered, loose debris outside buildings on Park Avenue,  
in alleys in the South Bronx,  
in the under-bridges of Harlem riverfronts.

NOT EVERY BAG IS GARBAGE.

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A new experience, one day in 1970 ...

*"Don't be afraid. It's me, Mary.  
I have a blanket and hot soup.  
A warm biscuit.  
A boiled egg for the morning."*

*"Are you okay for the night?  
Could you use another blanket?  
It's going to get colder later.  
I have some delicious, smoky sweet-potato soup.  
Just made it tonight."*

I will be by your side until you are comfortable again.

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We create expectations.  
We plant seeds of expectations.  
We nurture expectations.  
Expectations themselves can be comforting,  
but only if we fulfill them.  
The amount of good we can do in our lifetime is directly proportionate to the  
amount of inconvenience we are willing to absorb.

We are all broken and breakable together.  
We receive and give the knocks of life.  
Get used to it.  
Get over it.  
You'll be amazed at how less frequently you find yourself "losing it" when you realize that others know you're breakable.

Alone, feeling completely disconnected—  
that's where everyone lives some of the time.  
But that's when we are *least* alone!  
Because that's when we're most like each other,  
most able to understand and connect to each other.  
The darkness is where the light is born.  
You'll see it ... as sure as Dawn.

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Oh, merciful God, let us do what we can *while* we can!  
Out of the depths we cry to thee, O Lord!  
A prayer from deep down ...  
*"Jiggle us gently! Wake us up to adventure.  
Show us how to relish the holes in our plans, the holes in our lives, the  
holes in our hearts.  
Deep inside the hollow we feel at times, Lord, let us rest and be thankful for the light  
of those who break through our darkness, even when we think we aren't ready  
for their light. Amen."*

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Belonging is our natural state,  
but not always our natural experience.  
We can fix that.  
For someone.  
Today.  
I will be by your side until you are comfortable again.  
I love you in ways you don't yet love yourself.  
I love you before reasons.  
I love you in your chaos,  
in your un-worded fear,  
in your bold courage,  
I love you when you are most desperately alone.  
I love you when your eyes look into mine and wonder why I love you.

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I hold you gently in my heart, wherever else you think you are.  
And what I want to share with you today is a little comforting assurance,  
vivid in my soul,  
from the dyings I have companioned.  
What I have shared with so many, for eight decades now, is that the process of dying  
is just one more almost-familiar step in the process of living.  
Death is not scary.  
Something in us, intuitively, is at ease with our own transition into whatever it is  
that is our death.  
Death is not scary; *living* scares us.  
Fear holds us back in ways we too often don't see.  
We don't see that *living* is where we can help each other take away  
the fear of failing,  
the utter aloneness,  
the abandonment,  
the not-mattering.  
We can take away the fear of invisibility in life, and in death, by being there.  
But how far is far?  
I think if sight were the measure of closeness, then I am far from you all.  
But when I remember how dearly I am loved, and love, the distance drops away.  
I know that I am with you all, always.  
Now.  
Together.  
I will be by your side until you are comfortable again.

*"Don't be afraid. It's me, Mary.  
I have a blanket and hot soup.  
A warm biscuit.  
A boiled egg for the morning."*