

# Weekly Grace

*Grace: The freely given, unmerited favor and love of God. The influence or spirit of God operating in humans to regenerate or strengthen them; a virtue or excellence of divine origin.*



When we say grace at mealtimes, we are calling upon the Spirit to join us at the table. We are acknowledging the gifts of Mother Earth the provider of our meal. We are seeking the Peace that a moment of reflection before a meal brings. And that Great Good Thing that *grace* means to you.

Here are the graces I have shared with the FPL community in the *Parish News Briefs* during the time of Covid-19. If you have not made saying a table grace part of your day, it's never too late to start a new tradition. I hope one or more of these speak to you.

## This Week's Grace

**March 23rd** – Our first week home (keep it simple)

*For every cup and plateful,  
God, make me truly grateful.  
Amen*

When this grace becomes familiar, try having every person around your table say one word. When you get really good at it, see how fast you can say it!

**March 30<sup>th</sup>** – Week two of ? (time to sing!)

*For health and strength and daily food,  
We praise thy name, Oh God.  
Amen*

This can be sung! And, it's a round. Listen here...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAJDhcpAcTE>

If you're not super confident round singers, sing along with the recording! Once you get the

hang of it, give it a try without the recording. (Bonus: listen to the bell choir section of the recording! Remember how we rang bells during Winter Workshops?)

**April 6<sup>th</sup>** – Deepen into family time (family time is holy time, share what you believe)

\_\_\_\_\_, we give our thanks -  
*For food that stays our hunger,  
For rest that brings us ease,  
For homes where memories linger,  
We give our thanks for these.*  
*Amen*

For the \_\_\_\_\_, this is an opportunity to think about and talk about to whom you are addressing your grace. Parents, do you use “God” - “Spirit” - “Lord” - “Father” - “Allah” - “Mother” - “Universe” ... and what does that mean to you? Sharing what you believe, how you believe, and how you express your beliefs... with your children is incredibly important! At first, a child will believe what their parents believe. But they have to hear it from you. Sharing this with your children provides them with the foundation they need to come to their own understanding – and you modeling the ability, value, and courage to talk about it is invaluable.

Maybe you feel most comfortable starting this grace with, “We...” - acknowledging the importance of gratitude, but not needed to ascribe it to anything.

There are no right or wrong answers here; only Truth. Your truth.

If you're not sure what your beliefs are and/or are uncertain how to talk about them with your children, let's talk! Email [Margit@FPLincoln.org](mailto:Margit@FPLincoln.org) and we'll set a time to chat.

**April 13<sup>th</sup>** – We're at the one month at home mark! (God bless us, everyone!)

This week's grace is, actually, a blessing. A college friend of mine and I went to see “Fiddler on the Roof” when it was recently here in Boston. It's one of my favorites! There's a lot packed into that one show (it makes a great “family movie night” movie, too!)

In the show/movie, over the Sabbath dinner table, Jewish parents sing a grace – a blessing – for their children. In that one song, the parents communicate their hopes and dreams for their children's future, they model a ritual passed down from their ancestors, they link to a spiritual community (all observing the Sabbath in individual homes, together-apart), they share their spiritual beliefs with their children – they are bringing spirituality home!

*May the Lord protect and defend you.  
May He always shield you from shame.  
May you come to be  
In Israel a shining name.  
May you be like Ruth and like Esther.  
May you be deserving of praise.*

*Strengthen them, Oh Lord,  
And keep them from the strangers' ways.*

*May God bless you and grant you long lives.*

*May the Lord fulfill our Sabbath prayer for you.*

*May God make you good mothers and wives.*

*May He send you husbands who will care for you.*

*May the Lord protect and defend you.*

*May the Lord preserve you from pain.*

*Favor them, Oh Lord, with happiness and peace.*

*Oh, hear our Sabbath prayer.*

*Amen.*

Not all these words may apply to the people or beliefs in your house. It's a place to start, though. What rings true for you? What makes sense for your family?

As you bless the meal, you may also like to bless the people at the table with you. You may like to take turns – go right around the table and ask each person to bless the person next to them (kids may need to see this modeled, first). Parents, you may like your children to hear your hopes and dreams and wishes for them... or simply bless them with your love out loud. So powerful!

(here is a link to a clip from the movie - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaZqHy2ZHE>)

("Fiddler on the Roof" - not on Netflix, but \$2.99 on Verizon On Demand)

**April 20** – Earth Day is this week (we honor the Earth!)

*Mother Earth, we thank you for the bounty of our table.*

*Mother Earth, we thank you for all the things you give us.*

*(go around the table and list your favorite things)*

*Mother Earth, we marvel at your splendor.*

*(go around the table and share something you think is wonderful)*

*Mother Earth, we worry about you.*

*(go around the table and share your worries for Earth)*

*Mother Earth, we pledge to help you.*

*(go around the table and list something you are doing or will to help the Earth)*

*Mother Earth, we thank you for the bounty of our table.*

*Amen*

You may like to begin by saying the first line together, and then begin your meal. While you're eating, you can use the other lines for a little table conversation... then end the meal with the last line together, before cleaning up. There is no reason why a grace has to be at just one time or

another.

Extension... when the meal is over, look at what other countries are doing or not doing to take care of Mother Earth. Some are better than others. I wonder why that might be?

*(FPL is only publishing one News Brief per week again. Instead of Monday, look for the Weekly Grace in the Thursday News Brief and monthly Parish News.)*

**April 30** – We are in the holy month of Ramadan and wish our Muslim members and friends peace and joy.

*A prayer before the meal...*

bismillahi wa 'ala baraka-tillah

("In the name of God and with God's blessing")

Bismillahi wa 'ala baraka-tillah,

We give thanks for the food which nourishes our bodies.

Bismillahi wa 'ala baraka-tillah,

We give thanks for our family and friends, near and far.

Bismillahi wa 'ala baraka-tillah.

(you can cut and paste the Arabic into "Google Translate" and press the "listen" button to hear how to pronounce the blessing)

Ramadan is April 23 to May 23 this year. During the month, Muslim families will fast during the day. Before sunrise, families will gather at the table for suhur. At sunset, they share a larger meal called iftar, which breaks the fast. When the next crescent moon is sighted (or about 30 days) after the start, Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan with Eid al Fitr; a feast with special dishes and often shared with family and friends (when possible).

Fasting has been a spiritual practice in many religions for thousands of years. Thought to heighten spiritual awareness, fasting has also been linked to some interesting health benefits... I wonder if ancient people knew that; so built fasting into their traditions?

Perhaps, you might like to give spiritual fasting a try? I really like this guide...

<https://www.healthyhildegard.com/spiritual-fasting/>

**May 7** – in honor of Mother's Day

*Mother God,*

*We thank you for your many blessings...*

*For this meal, the hands who nurtured it from seed to table;*

*The people we share it with.*

*We thank you for our mothers...*

*Here, far, gone, related by blood, related by spirit;*

*Those who gave us life,  
Those who care for and love us.*

*For these and all blessings,  
We thank you, Mother God.*

*Bless 'ed be.*

It's Mother's Day... and it is right and good that we take a moment to honor and thank all those who have nurtured us. Guided us. Taught us. Led by example. Those to whom we are related, and those who we have brought into our lives because of their devoted love for us. Happy Mother's Day to the mothers, stepmothers, mothers-in-law, grandmothers, aunts, friend-mothers, neighbor-mothers... All.

**May 14** – Tomorrow is the 2-month mark of quarantine. Let naught mar the joy of family time – especially at the table.

*May naught mar the joy  
of our fellowship here.  
May none remain lonely,  
and hungry of heart among us.  
Let none go hence without  
the joy of new friendships.  
Give us more capacity for love,  
and a richer consciousness of being loved.*

(Walter Rauschenbusch)

Grace is often a blessing asked over the meal... a way of being grateful for the food and for those who prepared it. When your family gathers at the table, it might be one of the few times that everyone is together... even during quarantine, adults may still be working, or working in home offices (or secluded corners) in other rooms. Gathering together for a meal is a special part of any day. This week's grace offers a broader idea and the language is a little old fashioned, so might need a little "unpacking".

I read this as a statement of intention - what can you do to make sure there is joy at your table? To make sure no one feels lonely or left out? To think of those "among us" as people at our table and people in our community? To open your heart to more love - both given and received? Maybe that last question helps answer the first – and all the rest... Amen!

**May 21 and 28** – A little break. Go back and revisit a grace you loved or one you may have missed. You can create your own special family grace, too!

## June 4 – Black Lives Matter

Not surprisingly, this week's grace is a prayer - which can be said when all are gathered at your table; and also at bedtime, or when kids are sad and confused about what they're hearing and understanding, any time any of us need to remember there are hands holding us in love. This is from Traci Smith's "Prayers for Faithful Families" from Beaming Books.



Children can be concerned when they see upsetting things on television. They can “pick-up” when their parents are upset. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and what’s fair and unfair. The news this week is hard – and hopeful. If you need some suggestions for how to speak with your children about institutional racism, rioting, what happened to George Floyd and other black victims of police violence, please take a look at the suggestions collected here.

## June 11

Classic Summer Camp Grace (Sung to the Addams Family show tune)

We thank you, God, for giving  
The food we need for living  
Because we really need it  
And we like to eat it.  
Da na na nah (snap fingers twice)  
Da na na nah (snap fingers twice)  
Da na na nah (sing three times)  
(then snap fingers twice while saying...) Amen!

Camp. I have such fond memories of my summers at Camp Little Notch (Girl Scout Camp in

the Adirondacks) and the Methodist church bike camps I attended (biked the Lake Champlain region, and biked the Cape's Rt 6A - bridge to P-Town). My kids have enjoyed their camps. But not this year. It's all different because of Covid-19.

Perhaps your family has some experience with summer camp. This is a great time to think about ways you can re-create some of those activities at home. If they can't return to camp, talk about feelings of loss. Share favorite camp memories. Maybe watch the "Addams Family Values" movie - the kids go to summer camp, in Addams Family style! (there are some light adult themes - Uncle Fester is tricked into a marriage - sex is hinted at).

Did you learn any fun graces at camp? One I remember from the Methodist camp... singing the Doxology to the tune of the old Gillette commercial...

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6cyy\\_rziuk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6cyy_rziuk)!