

GENTLE IS THE SEA

A Service of Love for the Burial of Ashes

Poems, Scripture and Readings
for a Committal at Sea



Compiled by Parkhouse Products

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Non-Religious

Non-Religious Committal Readings:

- "As we stand by these gentle waters, we gather not just to say goodbye, but to celebrate the vibrant life of [Loved One's Name], whose spirit was as deep and vast as the ocean before us."
- "Today, beside these soothing waves, we come together to honor and remember [Loved One's Name], whose life, like the water's endless flow, touched us in countless ways."
- "In the presence of these tranquil waters and beautiful rose petals, we unite to celebrate [Loved One's Name], a soul as refreshing and inspiring as the sea, leaving ripples of love and joy in our hearts."
- "Here, where the water meets the shore, we gather to reflect on the life of [Loved One's Name], whose memories are as enduring and ever changing as the ocean, a constant reminder of their beautiful journey through life."
- **Celtic Blessing:** "May the tides and currents carry [Loved One's Name] on a journey of peace and tranquility. May the waters cleanse and renew, as we remember them in the ebb and flow of our lives, forever a part of the world's natural beauty."
- **Native American Water Blessing:** "Great Spirit, giver of life, we return [Loved One's Name] to the water, their spirit to the sky, their memories to the earth. May their journey be blessed with peace as they merge with the rivers that run to the sea, and the cycle of life continues."
- "Water teaches us what love already knows: that nothing truly disappears. It changes form. It moves from one place to another. It becomes part of the world we keep living in. Today we release what we can't hold forever, while we keep what matters most."

Poems (Excerpts)

**Follow hyperlinks for full versions.*

"Sea Fever" by John Masefield: "I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky, And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by..."

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54932/sea-fever-56d235e0d871e>

"Crossing the Bar" by Alfred Lord Tennyson: "Sunset and evening star, And one clear call for me! And may there be no moaning of the bar, When I put out to sea..."

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45321/crossing-the-bar>

"The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: "The tide rises, the tide falls, The twilight darkens, the curlew calls; Along the sea-sands damp and brown, The traveler hastens toward the town..."

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44651/the-tide-rises-the-tide-falls>

"Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep" by Mary Elizabeth Frye: "Do not stand at my grave and weep, I am not there; I do not sleep. I am a thousand winds that blow, I am the diamond glints on snow..."

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/do-not-stand-at-my-grave-and-weep/>

"Death of an Old Seaman" by Langston Hughes: "We buried him high on a windy hill, But his soul went out to sea... Do not, do not weep for me, For I am happy with my sea."

<https://poets.org/poem/death-old-seaman>

"Gone From My Sight" (often attributed to Henry Van Dyke)

"I am standing upon the seashore. A ship, at my side, spreads her white sails to the moving breeze and starts for the blue ocean... 'There, she is gone,' there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, 'Here she comes!'

<https://allpoetry.com/gone-from-my-sight>

"Alone I Will Not Be" by Captain Chad Theesfeld:

My comfort will come from the sea.

The stillness of calm waves will gently drift by

I will be as one with the sea.

When the sun sets on the ocean blue, remember me as I will always remember you.

As the sun rises...go live life as full as can be

Apart...you and me...but be at peace for I am free.

<https://scatteringonwater.co.uk/ashes-advice/poems-for-scattering-ashes-over-water/>

Christian

Bible Verses:

(The Sailor's Psalm) - *This is the most traditional reading for mariners.*

Psalm 107: 23-24, 28-30

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep... Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."

Psalm 93:3-4 - *Focuses on the majesty of the ocean as a reflection of the Divine.*

"The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

Psalm 139: 9-10 - *This is a beautiful passage often read to remind families that God's presence is everywhere, even in the middle of the ocean.*

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

(Protection in the Deep) - *This is a powerful verse for families who feel "adrift" in their grief.*

Isaiah 43:2

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Catholic / Episcopal (Committal at Sea)

The Book of Common Prayer - *This is the formal text used when the body or ashes enter the water.*

"We therefore commit this body to the deep, looking for the general Resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the sea shall give up her dead; and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like unto his glorious body."

Christian Committal Readings:

- "Almighty God, Just as You calmed the storm for the disciples, we ask that You bring calm and peace to the hearts of this family today. Into the hands of God, we commend [Name]'s spirit into Your loving care, we commit his/her remains to the waters before us. May he/she dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen."
- "Lord, we know that for those who trust in You, the end of this life is not a shipwreck, but a safe arrival. We commit [Name]'s earthly remains to the deep, knowing his/her spirit has already found its safe harbor in Your arms. No more storms, no more pain—only the stillness of Your eternal peace. Amen."
- "Lord, as vast as this ocean is before us, we know Your love for [Name] is deeper still. Just as You calmed the storm, bring peace to our hearts today. We release [Name] into Your keeping, trusting that he/she is held safe in Your presence forever. Amen."
- "We commit [Name] to the deep, resting on the truth of the resurrection. Into the hands of God, we commend his/her spirit. Because You live, we know that [Name] lives also, held safe in Your eternal peace. Amen."
- "Heavenly Father, as these waters embrace [Loved One's Name], we are reminded of the depth of your love. May they find rest in the vastness of your creation, and may we find comfort in knowing they are with you, forever a part of the universe's grand tapestry."
- "O Lord, we cast these ashes into the sea, entrusting [Loved One's Name] to your eternal care. May the vastness of the ocean remind us of your infinite love, and the sound of the waves bring us peace, knowing they are in your divine embrace."

Jewish

(Psalms of Comfort) - *Focuses on the majesty of the ocean as a reflection of the Divine.*

Psalm 93:3-4

"The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

(The Comfort of Presence) - *This is a beautiful passage often read to remind families that God's presence is everywhere, even in the middle of the ocean.*

Psalm 139: 9-10

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the **uttermost parts of the sea**; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

*Note: The **El Malei Rachamim** (God Full of Compassion) is the standard funeral prayer, often read in English or Hebrew.*

<https://www.rindskopfroth.com/jewish-prayers>

Jewish Committal Readings:

*"Compassionate God, who dwells on high and in the depths, Grant perfect rest beneath the wings of Your Divine Presence to our beloved **[Name]**. We commit his/her spirit back to the One who gave it. May he/she find rest in Your **Shelter of Peace** (Sukkat Shalom), and may his/her memory shine as a light in our hearts forever. **Amen.**"*

*"To the One who makes peace in the high places, We ask for peace over these waters and over this family today. We release **[Name]** into the care of the Eternal. The Lord is his/her keeper; the Lord is his/her shade. Go in peace, and return to the Source of all life. **Amen.**"*

*"We lift our eyes to the horizon, knowing that our help comes from the Maker of heaven and earth. The Lord is your Keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. We release **[Name]** into the care of the Guardian of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. The Lord shall guard your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forevermore. **Amen.**"*

"May his/her memory be a blessing."

Man: "Zich-ro-no liv-ra-cha."

Woman: "Zich-ro-nah liv-ra-cha."

Islamic

(The Return)

Surah Al-Fajr (89:27-30) *A beautiful verse about the soul finding peace.*

"O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him], and enter among My [righteous] servants, and enter My Paradise."

Islamic Committal Readings:

"In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. We release [Name] into the care of his/her Creator. As it is written: 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.'

O Allah, grant him/her peace, widen his/her entry, and wash him/her with the waters of Your forgiveness. Ameen."

"O Allah, You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful. We ask that You wrap [Name] in Your infinite mercy today. We commit his/her spirit to You, asking that You protect him/her from all fear and sorrow. Make his/her resting place a garden of peace, and grant patience to this family. Ameen."

"We call upon the One who is the Light of the heavens and the earth. We return [Name] to the source of all life. O Allah, let Your light guide him/her, and let Your peace surround him/her like these waters. May he/she dwell in Your safety until the Day of Promise. Ameen."

"We belong to Allah and to Him we return."

"Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un."

Pronunciation: In-na lil-la-hee wa in-na il-lay-hee ra-jee-oon.

Hindu

(The Eternal Soul) - *This is often read during the scattering of ashes to symbolize the soul moving on.*

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 22

"As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones."

(The River and the Ocean) - *This is perhaps the most perfect text for an ash scattering service in the Hindu tradition. It describes the soul's journey as a river returning to the source.*

Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.8

"As flowing rivers disappear into the sea, losing their name and form, so a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine Person, who is greater than the great."

Hindu Committal Readings:

"We remember that the body is but a vessel, but the soul (*Atman*) is eternal. It is never born, and it never dies. As a person sheds worn-out garments to put on new ones, so the soul casts off its worn-out body to enter a new journey. We release [Name]'s earthly remains to this water, knowing his/her spirit is free, unbreakable, and everlasting. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. (Peace, Peace, Peace)."

"According to the sacred traditions, life comes from the five elements, and today we return [Name] to them. Water to water. Earth to earth. Spirit to Spirit. Just as the river flows and eventually finds the sea, may [Name]'s soul find its way to the Divine Source. Be free, and journey well. Om Namō Narayana. (I bow to the Divine)."

"We pray for peace in the heavens, peace in the sky, peace on earth, and peace in these waters. We release [Name] into the embrace of the ocean. May he/she attain Moksha (liberation). May he/she be free from all pain and sorrow. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti."

In Hindu ceremonies, the ashes are almost always accompanied by loose flower petals (often Marigolds, which are orange/yellow).

"We offer these flowers as a sign of love, and we offer these ashes to the water as a sign of freedom."

Buddhist

(The Nature of Water) - *While not a sutra, this parable is very popular for water ceremonies.*

Thich Nhat Hanh (The Cloud)

"A cloud never dies. It can become rain or snow or ice, but a cloud cannot become nothing. The cloud does not fear birth or death. It only becomes water. The wave does not need to die to become water. She is already water."

(The Great Ocean) - *Buddhism often teaches that the ocean accepts all waters equally. This is a comforting thought about returning to the vastness of the universe.*

The Avatamsaka Sutra

"The great ocean has but one taste, the taste of salt. Even so, the true Dharma has but one taste, the taste of liberation. Just as the great ocean receives the flow of all rivers... so the ocean of wisdom receives the spirits of all beings."

Buddhist Committal Readings:

"We remember today that birth and death are only doors through which we pass. Just as a cloud transforms into rain and falls into the ocean, we release **[Name]**'s remains into this water. The wave does not need to die to become water. It is already water. You are free. You are everywhere. **Peace.**"

"The Buddha taught us that all things are impermanent, and that letting go is the path to peace. As a single drop of water enters the sea, it becomes the ocean. We release **[Name]** from all suffering and attachment. May he/she return to the vastness of life, and may he/she find the ultimate peace of Nirvana. **Om Mani Padme Hum.**"

"With compassion and love, we bid farewell to **[Name]**'s earthly form. We commit his/her ashes to the deep, trusting in the great compassion of the Universe. May the light guide you. May you be free from fear. May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace. **Namo Amitabha.**"

In Buddhist ceremonies, sound is very important for marking transitions.

- **Strike the bell once** before you start reading.
- **Strike the bell once** after you say the final words.

The fading sound of the bell over the water is a powerful symbol of impermanence (how things fade away but the vibration continues).