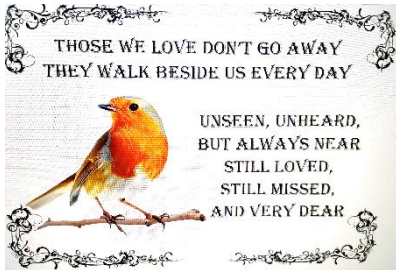


November – the month of remembrance



Mary Oliver is a poet who understood grief all too well. Here are some of her reflections.

STARLINGS IN WINTER (EXCERPT)

Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us,
even in the leafless winter,
even in the ashy city.
I am thinking now
of grief, and of getting past it;
I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart
pumping hard. I want
to think again of dangerous and noble things.
I want to be light and frolicsome.
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.

THE USES OF SORROW

Someone I loved once
gave me a box full of darkness.
It took me years to understand that
this, too, was a gift.

IN BLACKWATER WOODS (EXCERPT)

To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

HEAVY

That time
I thought I could not
go any closer to grief
without dying
I went closer,
and I did not die.
Surely God
had his hand in this,
as well as friends.
Still, I was bent,
and my laughter,
as the poet said,
was nowhere to be found.
Then said my friend Daniel
(brave even among lions),
“It is not the weight you carry
but how you carry it—
books, bricks, grief—
it’s all in the way
you embrace it, balance it, carry it
when you cannot, and would not,
put it down.”
So I went practicing.
Have you noticed?
Have you heard
the laughter
that comes, now and again,
out of my startled mouth?
How I linger
to admire, admire, admire
the things of this world
that are kind, and maybe
also troubled—
roses in the wind,
The sea geese on the steep waves,
a love
to which there is no reply?