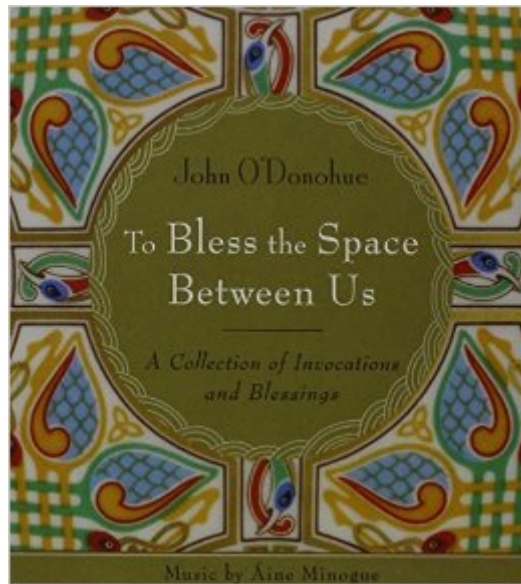


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To Bless The Space Between Us: A Collection Of Invocations And Blessings



Synopsis

When we stand before crucial thresholds in our lives," asks poet and philosopher John O'Donohue, "where can we turn for guidance and protection?" On *To Bless the Space Between Us*, he shares words of wisdom and encouragement to help us traverse such crossings. Covering seven universal levels-Beginnings, Desires, Thresholds, Homecomings, States of the Heart, Callings, and Beyond Endings-O'Donohue delivers with uncommon clarity and lyrical beauty a series of invocations and blessings for everyday grace and contemplation. To illuminate "pathways of presence through the geography of new worlds," he calls forth the omnipresent aid of the divine that will lead us beyond our limitations. For it is "when we are true to the call of experience," O'Donohue assures, that "we are true to God." In the tradition of his classic *Anam Cara* (Bantam Books 9780553505924), *To Bless the Space Between Us* is presented with an earthy eloquence and incomparable resonance by this master of Celtic consciousness-offering listeners an atmospheric and thought provoking collection that rekindles the passionate heart. Music by acclaimed Irish harpist Áine Minogue.

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Customer Reviews

John O'Donohue died peacefully in his sleep on January 8 of this year. He was working on a book on the late medieval mystic Meister Eckhart. Hopefully, enough of it was completed to warrant a posthumous publication. In the meantime, his *To Bless the Space Between Us* is O'Donohue's parting gift. The book is a collection of blessings. That doesn't necessarily sound too exciting until one recognizes the deep-down meaning of a blessing, and O'Donohue's introduction provides some guidance. In our overly busy culture, he writes, we frequently race over the "crucial thresholds in our

life" without pausing to take note of their significance. We no longer have "rituals to protect, encourage, and guide us as we cross over into the unknown" (p. xiv). A blessing is precisely one of those protecting, encouraging, and guiding rituals. It memorializes our transitions, connects us with a wider community (since none of us really ever travels alone), and strives to "present a minimal psychic portrait of the geography of change it names" (ibid). Blessings, then, are all-important. They serve to orient us in our life's journey, establish fellowship with fellow travelers, and remind us of what we too often forget: that we are pilgrims, not haphazard wanderers. Because there are all kinds of thresholds that lead to new stages of the journey, O'Donohue has written all kinds of blessings: for obvious thresholds such as birthdays, parenthood, adulthood, old age, and death; for interior thresholds such as courage, grief, addiction, suffering, loneliness; for the thresholds of callings to the priesthood, marriage, farming; and for the thresholds that our yearnings for love, peace, and friendship can nudge us towards.

"Endings seem to lie in wait," John O'Donohue wrote. His certainly did. He died in his sleep, January 3, 2008, on vacation near Avignon. He was just 53. I met John O'Donohue only once. I had read *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*, the 1997 book that made him deservedly famous. "Read" is wrong. At 100 words a minute, I had, over weeks, absorbed enough of this deceptively simple exploration of "soul friendship" to grasp that here was an original thinker, a gifted poet and, most astonishing of all, a philosopher who had forged a way of looking at the world that was painfully aware of human frailty but insistent on the triumphal power of divine love. And he wrote beautifully. A book this exciting, you have to talk about it. I mentioned O'Donohue to Sarah Ban Breathnach, the author of the Oprah-annointed *Simple Abundance* and *Moving On*. As luck would have it, she and O'Donohue were friends. And when he came through New York, Sarah generously arranged a dinner. That was the night I learned to drink single malt. And was there ever a better teacher in the art of sipping than an Irish philosopher and mystic who had worn the collar for 19 years? I don't recall what we talked about, and neither can my wife, who does not drink; all I remember is the cascades of laughter, the unbuckled happiness of people who are thrilled to be alive, and together, and sharing good fellowship with sympathetic souls in a nice restaurant on a rainy New York night. An evening like that is so rare I think of it as a religious experience. John O'Donohue, a holy man if ever there was one, had a lot of nights like that.

This book of blessings is a great gift to us all. I bought the book and the audio CDs and I have used both almost daily since I received them. It is a CD/book you will use, because the occasions for the

different blessings will arise in your life. The author's lovely Irish brogue as he reads the blessings and the music of Irish harpist Aine Minogue allow for a deeper understanding of the written word. The Irish poet and philosopher John O'Donohue did not shy away from topics that will make us cringe. He wrote a blessing "For love in the time of conflict", a "Blessing for the Parents of one who has committed crime", and - possibly one of the hardest tragedies of all - a "Blessing for the family and friends of a suicide". John O'Donohue was a priest for 19 years (before he committed all his time to writing and speaking) and he knows about death from his work with the sick and the dying. But at the same time he is intimately familiar with the opposite of impermanence, he knows about the living presence of the light in our lives. He talks about the luminous light in the mystical landscape of the Burren in the West of Ireland (his home), that reaches us when we become still to listen and witness. If we are mindful, nature and landscape can alert us to the eternal and we might be allowed to see a light that will speak to our human fears. The blessings in this collection address crucial thresholds: A New Year blessing, a Morning Offering, the birth of a child, starting a new job, the breakup of a relationship, the experience of failure and the joy of friendship to name just a few. The invocations provide the structure of rituals that will protect, encourage and guide us on our life journey.

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