A LITURGY FOR A

Friend of One Who Grieves

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O Christ,
I am at such a loss.

I want to help,
but I don't know what to do,
or what to say.
I don't know how to act in light
of everything that's changed.

But I know this: I love my friend.
And I do not want to let this brooding
awkwardness lead me to withdraw until
over time my avoidance becomes a pattern
that could leave us stranded on opposite
sides of an emotional chasm.

Give me wisdom, grace, and empathy,
O Lord, to simply walk beside, to let
my friend lead as they learn to navigate this
grief, and not to ever in arrogance believe
that I can somehow set them straight, or make
it right, or give advice they do not need from me.

Teach me how to set aside my own discomfort,
so that I might compassionately perceive, in
the context of their specific loss and their
specific need, what true encouragement
and helpfulness would mean.

Above all, let me learn to remain present
in their life, not forcing them to speak
of loss, but being ever ready to listen
when they want to share their tears, to steward
their story—however much they choose to
entrust to me—and so let me serve my dear
friend well by a close and constant willingness
to bear a small part of their long burden.

Amen.

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