

READINGS: THESE PIECES MIGHT BE SUITABLE FOR READING AT FUNERALS

Grief is the ashes from which the phoenix rises and the mettle of rebirth. It returns life from the dead. It teaches that there is nothing absolutely true or untrue....Grief will make a new person out of you; if it doesn't kill you in the making.

Stephanie Ericsson - "Companion Through the Darkness"

WHITE ASHES

In silently contemplating the transient nature of human existence, nothing is more fragile and fleeting in this world than the life of a person. Thus we have not heard of a human life lasting for a thousand years. Life swiftly passes and who among people can maintain his form for even a hundred years?

Whether I go before others, or others go before me; whether it be today or it be tomorrow, who is to know? Those who leave before us are countless as drops of dew. Though in the morning we may have radiant health, in the evening we may return to white ashes. When the winds of impermanence blow, our eyes are closed forever; and when the last breath leaves us, our face loses its colour.

Though loved ones gather and lament, everything is to no avail. The body is then sent into an open field and vanishes from this world with the smoke of cremation, leaving only the white ashes. There is nothing more real than this truth of life. The fragile nature of human existence underlies both the young and the old and therefore we must, one and all, turn to the teachings of the Buddha and awaken to the ultimate source of life.

By so understanding the meaning of death, we shall come to fully appreciate the meaning of this life which is unrepeatable and thus to be treasured above all else. By virtue of true compassion let us together live with the thought of Buddha in our hearts. (Renyu, White Ashes: This piece is traditionally read at Jodoshinshu funerals)

## LITURGICAL PIECES SUITABLE FOR FUNERALS

### The Heart Sutra

KANJIZAI BOSATSU  
GYO JIN HANNYA HARAMITA  
JI SHO KEN GO UN KAI KU  
DO ISSAI KU YAKU  
SHARISHI  
SHIKI FU I KU  
KU FU I SHIKI  
SHIKI SOKU ZE KU  
KU SOKU ZE SHIKI  
JU SO GYO SHIKI YAKU BU NYO ZE  
SHARISHI ZE SHO HO KU SO  
FU SHO FU METSU  
FU KU FU JO  
FU ZO FU GEN  
ZE KO KU CHU  
MU SHIKI MU JU SO GYO SHIKI  
MU GEN NI BI ZETS SHIN NI  
MU SHIKI SHO KO MI SOKU HO  
MU GEN KAI NAI SHI MU I SHIKI KAI  
MU MU MYO  
YAKU MU MU MYO JIN  
NAI SHI  
MU RO SHI  
YAKU MU RO SHI JIN  
MU KU SHU  
METSU DO  
MU CHI YAKU MU TOKU  
I MU SHO TOKKO  
BODAISATTA E  
HANNYA HARAMITA  
KO SHIN MU KE GE  
MU KE GE KO MU U KU FU  
ON RI ISSAI TENDO MU SO  
KU GYO NEHAN  
SAN ZE SHO BUTSU  
E HANNYA HARAMITA  
KO TOKU A NOKU TA RA  
SANMYAKU SAMBODAI  
KO CHI HANNYA HARAMITA  
ZE DAI SHIN SHU  
ZE DAI MYO SHU  
ZE MU JO SHU  
ZE MU TO DO SHU  
NO JO ISSAI KU  
SHIN JITSU FU KO  
KO SETSU HANNYA HARAMITA SHU  
SOKU SETSU SHU WATSU  
GYATE GYATE HARA GYATE  
HARA SO GYATE BODHI SOWA KA  
HANNYA SHIN GYO

Quan Shi Yin Bodhisattva  
Practises deeply "other shore wisdom",  
Sees the five skandhas completely empty  
Goes beyond the world of affliction.  
Oh Shariputra,  
This world and the Pure Land are not apart!  
The Pure Land is not apart from here!  
The Form World is the emptiness  
The Emptiness World is this world of form.  
All the skandhas: regard them like this.  
Shariputra, See the Empty character of all:  
Not the birth and death world;  
Not the defiled and pure world;  
Not the gain and loss world.  
Be in the empty centre,  
Where the five skandhas are absent;  
Sensual attachments are absent;  
Sensual delights are absent;  
Sense made worlds are absent;  
Radiance is not lacking,  
Therefore no struggle darkness to destroy,  
Nor any other of conditioning's chains.  
Be free of decay and death.  
No need to strive to destroy them.  
No affliction, no arising,  
No suppressing, no path;  
Be not concerned with  
Wisdom and attainment.  
A bodhisattva relies  
On the other shore wisdom  
Where mind is no obstacle  
So there is no fear.  
Going beyond all troublesome states  
Just practise nirvana  
Like all the Buddhas, past, present and future,  
Just rely on other shore wisdom  
Thus attain supreme, perfect, enlightenment  
Samyak-sambodhi,  
Thus to know other shore wisdom  
The great inexplicable mantra  
The great radiant mantra  
The unexcelled mantra  
Incomparable mantra  
Able to clear away every suffering  
It is true. It is not false.  
Proclaim the prajna paramita mantra  
That is proclaimed and proclaimed like this:  
Going, going, going beyond,  
Always going beyond, awakening. Svaha!

## IPPEN'S HYMN

(Ippen was a Japanese Pureland poet)

Search into yourself,  
But froth on the stream  
That soon vanishes  
See nothing remains

Ponder on your life,  
A shimmer of moon  
With each fleeting breath  
How it falls away

Human and god realms  
We cherish and seek  
Though we love such forms  
No one can keep them

The pain of the hells  
All the lower realms  
Though we all hate them  
We seize them again.

From far in the past  
To this present day  
The things we long for  
Remain out of reach.

Some may understand  
The two Dharma gates  
But old mind still turns  
Subverting the Truth.

Those entanglements  
Cast them all away  
And with a true heart  
Just call Amida

With breath after breath  
Amida Buddha  
Namo Amida  
The end of false thought

That very moment  
From perfect bliss realm  
Amida will come  
With kind Quan Shi Yin.

Their hands they reach out  
In welcoming joy  
When we just entrust  
They do draw us forth

## HYMN: ENLIGHTENED, COMPASSIONATE

(Words: Dharmavidya : This hymn can be sung to the Christian hymn tune "Immortal, Invisible")

Enlightened, compassionate,  
beyond human thought  
The way of nirvana  
the Buddha has taught.  
The wheel he set turning  
brought joy to the world  
The Dharma drum thundered,  
its banner unfurled.

Oh Prince of the Shakyas,  
your kingdom disowned,  
We now in our own hearts  
will find you enthroned  
From out of your care for  
a world that was blind  
Renouncing a kingdom  
you conquered the mind.

So empty, so marv'lous,  
you cling onto nought  
By Mara, house-builder,  
you never are caught.  
His ridge pole is broken,  
his work all undone,  
The way of nirvana  
at last has been won.

For all life, in all worlds,  
you boundlessly care.  
Your pure deeds, your pure thoughts,  
your wisdom you share.  
With virtues so precious  
too numerous to tell,  
With pure light of kindness  
you darkness dispel.

Refreshing, restoring,  
by your perfect art  
The rain of the Dharma  
falls into our heart  
The seed of all goodness  
within us to feed  
That we may be nourished  
with all that we need.  
No giver, no gift and  
no merit we see  
For all has but one taste  
in Dharma's great sea  
The taste of true love in  
our hearts evermore  
When trusting in you we  
cross to the far shore.

## POEMS FOR USE AT FUNERALS

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 glint on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you wake in the morning hush,  
I am the swift, uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circling flight.  
I am the soft starlight at night.

Do not stand at my grave and weep.  
I am not there, I do not sleep.  
Mary Frye (1932)

### **Remember Me**

Christina Georgina Rossetti. 1830–1894

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.