



Now it is August and lockdown restrictions have eased a bit, things have become a little brighter.

**God of compassion who can enter where we cannot go  
And who can touch where we aren't allowed to hold,  
Come close on our behalf to those we love.  
We are confused lonely and hurting at this time.  
Please be our hands and feet our smile and words  
To lighten the darkness...  
For nothing is impossible with you**

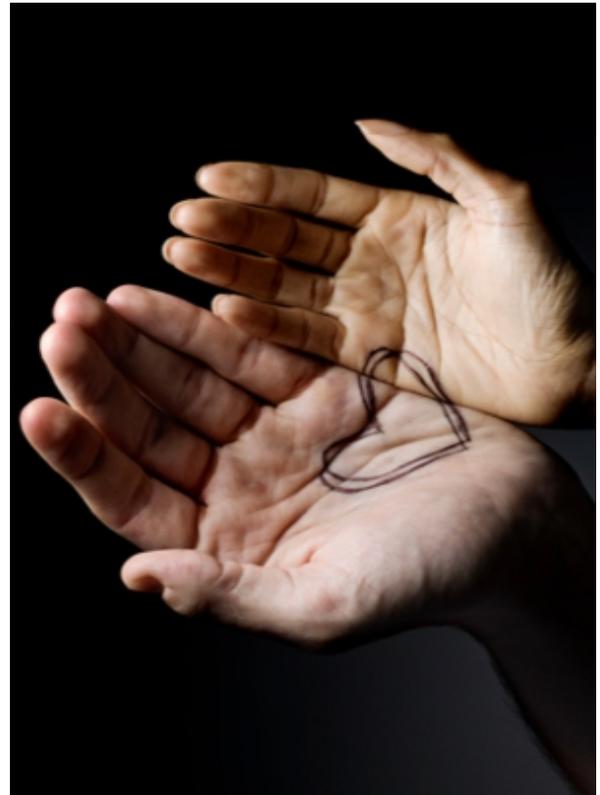
I have been thinking of HANDS.  
I have seen somewhere lovely pictures of hands  
caring, working, delivering.



There is a poem by Michael Rosen called "These are the hands" for the NHS.

***These are the hands  
That touch us first  
Feel your head  
Find your pulse  
And make your bed  
These are the hands  
That tap your back  
Test your skin  
Hold your arm  
Wheel the bin  
Change the bulb  
Fix the drip  
Pour the jug  
Replace your hip***

***These are the hands  
That fill the bath  
Mop the floor  
Flick the switch  
Soothe the sore  
Burn the swabs  
Give us a jab  
Throw out the sharps  
Design the lab  
And these are the hands  
That stop the leaks  
Empty the pan  
Wipe the pipes  
Carry the can  
Clamp the veins  
Make the cast  
Log the dose  
And touch us last.***





***Finally here is a prayer from an ageing woman (anonymous). It is a prayer, which I often read, to remind me of myself! It is usually attributed to a seventeenth-century nun, but this prayer is in fact of unknown origin — but its sentiments are only too familiar.***

***Lord, you know better than I know myself, that I am growing older, and will some day be old. Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.***

***Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but you know, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end. Keep my mind from the recital of endless details—give me wings to come to the point.***

***I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains — they are increasing, and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. Help me to endure them with patience.***

***I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others.***

***Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken.***



***Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a saint — some of them are so hard to live with — but a sour old woman is one of the crowning works of the devil.***

***Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people. And give me, O Lord, the grace to tell them so.***