

### **A Blessing Called Sanctuary**

You hardly knew  
how hungry you were  
to be gathered in,  
to receive the welcome  
that invited you to enter  
entirely—  
nothing of you  
found foreign or strange,  
nothing of your life  
that you were asked  
to leave behind  
or to carry in silence  
or in shame.

Tentative steps  
became settling in,  
leaning into the blessing  
that enfolded you,  
taking your place  
in the circle  
that stunned you  
with its unimagined grace.

You began to breathe again,  
to move without fear,  
to speak with abandon  
the words you carried  
in your bones,  
that echoed in your being.  
You learned to sing.  
But the deal with this blessing  
is that it will not leave you alone,  
will not let you linger  
in safety,  
in stasis.

The time will come  
when this blessing  
will ask you to leave,  
not because it has tired of you  
but because it desires for you  
to become the sanctuary  
that you have found—  
to speak your word  
into the world,  
to tell what you have heard  
with your own ears,  
seen with your own eyes,  
known in your own heart:

that you are beloved,  
precious child of God,  
beautiful to behold,  
and you are welcome  
and more than welcome here.  
—Jan Richardson from *Circle of Grace*

**Prayer for Discerning Justice, Welcome & Inclusion**

Today, O God of all days,  
give us an experience of your heart.  
Draw us deep into your very being,  
into the core of your love for us, others, and the world.

Give us a glimpse of others the way you see others:  
loving them, welcoming them,  
and delighting in the way they give glory to God  
through their very existence.

Help us to discern out of that open place of deep affection  
so that we too might be useful vessels of your love in the world.