

A Blessing for Starting Over

Joanna Brooks

First, bless the burst of anger; its force will get you free.

Then, bless the tears that follow; they will provide new sight.

Bless your bare feet as you put them on the earth. Run.

Bless your toes when they bleed.

They may be small but they don't shrink from working and feeling.

Just like your broken nails, your scarred belly, your startled mind.

So bless them as well.

Bless the clothes that have covered you, then leave them at the shore.

Walk into the water until it covers you, lift your feet,

and recite a known prayer over yourself. Twice.

Any known prayer will do.

If you come from ocean, taste salt.

If you come from scrub, burn sage.

If you come from desert, offer pollen.

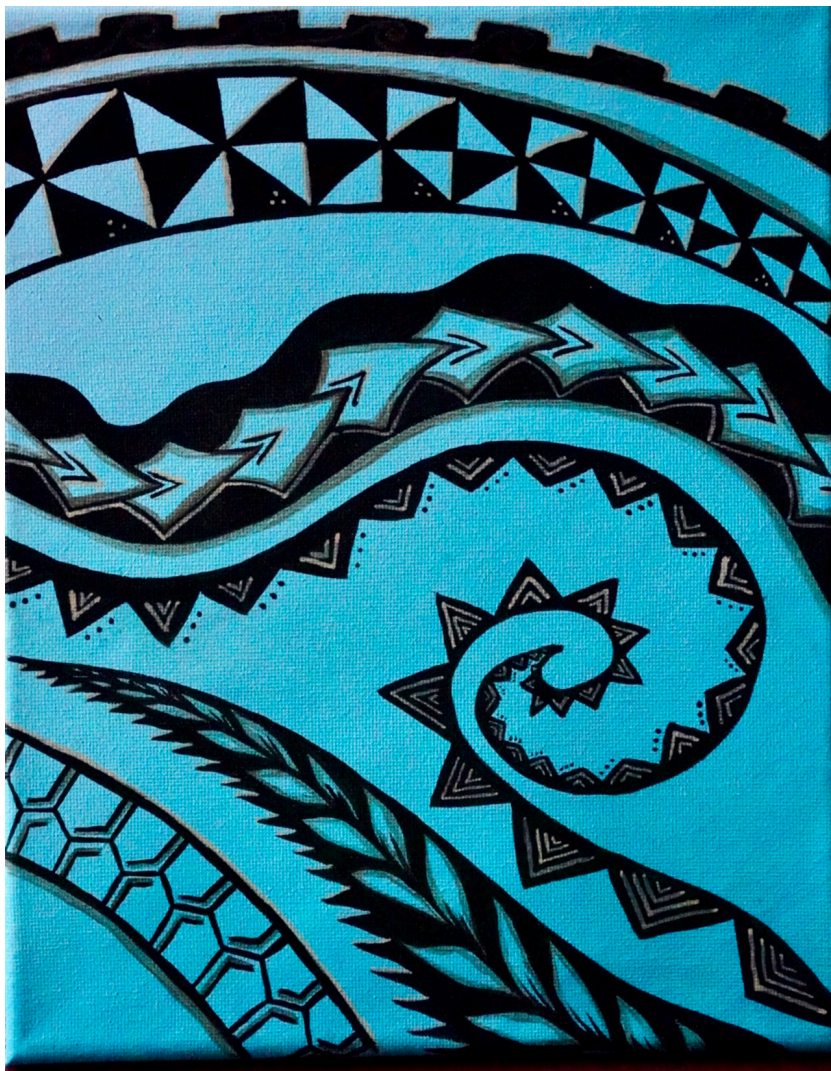
If you come from prairie, grind grain.

Bless the freshly floured board.

Bless the blank page,

The bare canvas.

Bless the fact that these simple things have a place in your life.



Kalani Tonga
Taste Salt
acrylic on canvas, 8"x10"

And bless your actual life, the life you made,
The bodies you gather in at night,
The ones who trust you for light, soup, and blankets.
Bless the parts of you that stayed behind to hold it all together,
So that other parts could run to survive.

They are the stubborn ones hiding in the hills among the bones of
wild horses.
They are the tough ones sheltered under the concrete hum of highway
overpasses.
They are the beautiful ones who refuse to surrender the meadow or
the moon to sleep.
They are the burning ones who go about in strange cities discovering
whole alphabets.

One of them is on her way home now.
With these words I bless her.
Offer her light, soup, and blankets.
Hear what she has to say.
Hear again for the first time
the sound of your actual name.

JOANNA BROOKS is an award-winning author or editor of ten books on race, religion, gender, social movements, and American culture. She has appeared in global media outlets including the BBC, NPR, the *Daily Show*, CNN, MSNBC, and the *Washington Post* and helped create and lead organizations advancing the rights and well-being of people seeking asylum and progressive people of faith. As Associate Vice President for Faculty Advancement at San Diego State University, she leads faculty development efforts responsive to the needs of diverse faculty at a large, public, and research-intensive Hispanic-serving institution of higher education. She holds a PhD in English from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is a proud fourth-generation Southern Californian.



Trevor Southey
Stewardship/Breadmaker
intaglio print, 18"x24"