

Blessing of Hands

~Pam Baird

In these past two days together we have honored the head and the heart...and now in this closing ritual...this is our time to honor our hands.

We have spent a significant time together. While it has only been a couple of days and many of us didn't know each other when this journey began...each has been a part of the process of striving to improve, not only ourselves as human beings and as caregivers but hopefully we have moved forward to improve the quality of palliative care across the nation. We've shared in centering rituals yesterday and today...and as we prepare to adjourn and say goodbye perhaps this closing ritual is the most significant of all. In thinking about how we would like to send

you back into the world, the Blessing of Hands seems a meaningful and fitting ritual given the nature of our work.

Our work is of the heart...and our hands help us to care for those we serve. Some have said that the hands are the connection to the heart...and perhaps that is so.

Hands in this room give medicines, wash bodies, straighten sheets...take vital signs. Hands in this room wipe tears, hold those who are suffering and gently touch the other in quiet support in times of pain.

I'd like to ask you to hold your hands in front of you. And look at your hands, maybe more closely, more intimately than ever before. Look at your palms, each finger and thumb the backs of your hands.

And in the quiet of this moment, let come to mind all the things your hands have done through the many years...for you, your family, your friends...total strangers...and for your patients, clients and their families as well.

Your hands have fed you...and perhaps your children or those who were infirmed...they have allowed you to dress yourself...and perhaps others as well...they make it possible to drive to work or open the door or write down a thought or a poem. These hands, your hands, no matter what they look like, no matter how beautiful...or unattractive...you think they might be...your hands are sacred because they complete a kind of connection between you and yourself, you and those you love, you and your patients, you and your world.

And now as you consider the wonder of your hands...
I offer this blessing...

May these hands be blessed.

May they be both gentle and strong.

May they be filled with courage, respect and
understanding.

May these hands truly be a connection to the
heart

And may they always serve in compassion and
kindness.