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A Prayer for a Pope
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“Although the life of a person is in a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.”

– Pope Francis

The greatest piece of advice I’ve ever been given was to “bloom where I’m planted.” I’ve lived in many difficult circumstances, among many thorns and weeds. At times, I’ve felt my faith wilting under the darkness of that thicket.

Instead, I’ve bloomed. My faith and participation in the life of the Church has sustained me through some of the most difficult and heartbreaking experiences of my life. That would not be possible without the leadership of Pope Francis – a leadership of accompaniment and love.

The Church today is barbed with the thorns of abuse, hypocrisy, and clericalism. Finding the strength to hold onto my faith in such a landscape has been difficult, especially since I am a gay man. Pope Francis has given me a belief that a good seed can grow even among such thorns.

When asked about gay people, his response “who am I to judge?” was a major and historical shift. The idea that a Pope would refuse to insult and degrade gay people, but instead actively encourage our social embrace, is profound. I know his leadership is imperfect. What I admire, though, is the strength to take the first steps across that landscape. Leading an organization that is burdened with millennia of toxic tradition towards a new way of thinking takes wide abilities and deep values. I admire his willingness to follow his values along this path.

He has written about how the saints accompany people like me along our own paths, constantly reaching back to guide and protect us. I pray that they do the same for him.