

**Facing Death: A Companion in Words
and Images**

By LINDA WATSON (WITH PHOTOGRAPHY
BY MAGGIE SALE)

Baltimore: Health Professions Press, 2009.
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To whom would you give this book? The author, a retired pastoral care professional who worked in the care of the dying, suggests it is for patients with life limiting illnesses and/or their carers (both formal and informal). Linda Watson originally organized the texts, a collection of her own thoughts and pieces from religious and other writings, for her sister who was dying of cancer when she, Linda, was unable to visit. The pictures, a uniformly beautiful set of calm nature close-ups or expansive views, were added when the author was encouraged to work with a nature photographer to develop the book for publication.

The stated aim of the book is to assist patients and their relatives or friends, who might be finding it difficult to talk about death and dying, to find words to express their feelings through reading the texts or reflecting on the pictures. To assist in this there is a

section at the back for the patient and/or their carers to add further personal reflections and photographs.

As a Palliative Care doctor I can see that this book could be very helpful for some patients and their carers. The texts cover a range of situations, and while many might be categorized as “warm and fuzzy”, several express the distress and strong emotions often experienced by patients facing end of life situations. The photographs are perhaps too gorgeous, and maybe some scenes depicting storms or disasters might add more topics for discussion. We know that the art and poems of patients in palliative care settings can be very confronting and that the patients can be assisted in their acceptance of their situations by discussing their disturbing poems and paintings. I would see the book as a useful addition to the pastoral care section of the library of a palliative care unit, as well as being available for patients and relatives to use, with information on how to order the book for individual use. Perhaps future editions will be a bit more adventurous in content.

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[Review of the book Facing death: a companion in words and images]