

**We gather together, Lord, in your name
To give thanks
To have fun
To celebrate life.**

Hear us, Lord, hear us.

**For food and friends and lovely things
And knowing why the caged bird sings**

We give you thanks.

**For laughter and music and dance till you drop
And good conversation going on non-stop**

We give you thanks.

**For Maya our friend, her life and her story,
For singin' and swingin' and gettin' merry,**

We give you thanks.

**But for those who are hungry and singin' the blues
For all of God's children who still need shoes
We long for a just and a fair world too
Help us to work to make that dream come true,**

Hear us, Lord, hear us.

**So now we begin.
And as we begin
We say simply
Very simply
With hope
Thank you, Lord, thank you
For everything.**

Amen.

Maya Angelou was a dear friend. She invited me to say the grace at the great feast that was organised at the Dorchester Hotel to celebrate her 70th birthday. I've used titles of her books and lines from some of her poems to construct this prayer.