



The Grace of Resilience...

Welcome: Rev. Diana Johnson

 Opening Song: *Welcome to the Mystic Heart*, written by Chris & Diana Johnson, performed by in2it

Introduction & Opening Prayer: Sherri Dotter, RScP

 Featured Music: *Stronger Than Ever*, written by Gary Lynn Floyd, performed by Dalton Fitzgerald

Good morning and thank you for joining us in celebration this morning. It's so important to take the time to celebrate, to feel and share the absolute joy of being alive. There is so much Good always unfolding, isn't there? Those of us who are listening this morning have the time, the leisure, and the technology to be able to gather in the Zoom Room, to stay socially connected even in times of physical distancing. That's worth celebrating. I'll bet we're all enjoying the warmth of a comfortable space as we sit indoors on this chilly morning. That's definitely worth celebrating. Let's get to the real basics...I'll bet that each one of us got to have a hot shower and a hot cup of coffee or tea this morning if we wanted one. We woke up in a warm bed...that's two blessings! We have clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, nutritious food on our tables, and our bodies and minds are healthy enough that we are able to attend to our spirit this morning...we are so incredibly blessed.

We have been talking a lot about Celebration as an important Spiritual Practice, and one that often gets forgotten. We get all serious about our prayer, meditation, and study, which is fine in its own time and place. You've the song *Turn, Turn, Turn*...there's a time to every purpose under heaven. The lyrics to that song are adapted from the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3:

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance...”

The sacred scriptures of the world tell us that celebration is a holy, creative act, an act of devotion to the Infinite Intelligence that is manifesting as all of creation. And by celebrating, we bring our awareness to the Joy that is inherent in us, our Divine Birthright, a quality of Spirit that is ever available. So I say again, welcome to the Mystic Heart Sunday Celebration...a time of honoring the Divine, honoring Life, honoring ourselves and honoring one another...and sharing in the joy of Life together.

Let's take a moment before we go any further to remember and sense our joyful connection as a human family... coming together with a common desire...to be the change

we wish to see in our world...to take an active part in the conscious evolution of humanity...so that we can leave the world a better place for our children and their children.

Let's breathe together, allowing ourselves to settle into a field of Absolute Joy, Gratitude, and Aliveness, where we are all One Life, inseparable...interdependent...each of us an irreplaceable strand in the tapestry of Life. Feel into this moment, into the gathering of sacred community.

Now let's expand our connection. Visualize with me a global web of consciousness, each of us a point of Light, all interconnected across the planet...let's include all beings who in this moment, might be sitting in meditation or prayer, might be attending sacred services...acknowledging the Presence of the Divine... consciously connected by our whole-hearted devotion...feeling the collective intention that brought us here...feeling the impulse to grow and evolve that's awakening in all of us.

As we sense this very intimate connection, breathe in the Joy, the Peace, the Power, and the Life present in this moment, and then send it forth into the atmosphere as you exhale...knowing that these qualities Guide and Govern all that unfolds...no exceptions.

This is our time of Celebration and Communion. In consciously establishing our connection with all beings, our work...our prayer, meditation, and communion...is empowered. We make a difference.

Our theme for the month of November is *All is Blessing*...and last week, at the Taize, we used the topic *Grateful By Design* as the focal point of our meditative journey. We agreed that we are beings who are always at choice. As I choose, I am subject to the laws of nature. The effect of my choices ripples out to affect those around me...and those ripples continue on, further than I can know. We are all literally interconnected...by Design. My choices matter.


We also talked about how as humans, we are built for awe and wonder...by Design. And the natural result of our being in awe is Gratitude.

Today's message, *Grace in Resilience*, is really about one of the less-recognized gifts that living a grateful life has to offer us.

First of all, what is resilience? From its Latin root, *resilient* means to *spring back, to rebound, to return quickly to one's prior form or position after being bent or stretched*.

Every one of us realizes that life brings change, setbacks, loss, and grief ...it's a normal part of life. We're certainly getting a fair share of that right now with the pandemic and world conditions as they are. We might say that for humans, **resilience is the psychological, emotional, and spiritual strength and flexibility that allows us to adapt, thrive, and return to our baseline quickly after difficult experiences happen.**

Resilience is a natural state. We can see it in nature...forests burn and then produce new growth. Land rises and falls as earthquakes reshape the surface of the earth. Author Carolyn Myss tells us that “No natural form of life mourns the organic shifting of the sands of time except humans. Again and again (Lord) we plant our feet firmly on shaking ground, determined to stop fires in the forest and erupting earthquakes from their task of breaking new ground wide open. Because we do not want our lives, our personal worlds, to change.” We refuse to acknowledge the natural ebb and flow of Life...

 Embedded Music: *Turn, Turn, Turn*, Adapted from Ecclesiastes 3 by Bob Dylan, performed by Dalton Fitzgerald

Despite the fact that Life has forever been unfolding in cycles, in seasons, we just can't seem to surrender to what is...to go with the flow. Right? Maybe it's just me, but I *know* how things are supposed to be. They're supposed to be the way I WANT them to be. Right? Why is that? Is it that I am so self-centered that I can't see beyond my own ideas? Not usually. It's just that I'm comfortable with what I know. We all like to be comfortable. The problem is that comfort is a deep hole. I can only speak for myself, but when I get too comfortable, I get a little bit complacent...maybe even a little bit lazy. I stop moving forward, growing. And then what happens? A gentle nudge. If I miss it, or look the other way, it becomes a challenge. If I still won't be moved, I get a problem. And if that doesn't do it, I get a full-blown crisis. The Universal two-by-four!

The interesting thing is that despite our desire to stay in our comfort zones, when we are faced with sudden change, we adapt. When we are faced with a crisis, we step up. We are *resilient*. We are part of nature. We're built that way.

And life certainly offers us an endless stream of opportunities to apply the grace of Resilience. It takes resilience when I want to initiate a new pattern in my life because the old habit is fixed so firmly in place. It takes Resilience to nurture a creative vision that only I believe in. It takes the grace of Resilience to get up in the morning when I am feeling overwhelmed by life's problems and conditions. Here's the really good news...the organic design of living creatures is to be resilient; to survive, adjust, and find a way through difficulties. We're problem-solvers. We love puzzles and challenges. Even when life knocks us down, our nature is to get back up again.

Even when appearances might tell us that resilience is lacking, any one of us can choose to step into, or align with, our True Nature. We are Divine Expressions, or Emanations, of an Infinitely Intelligent and Powerful Life Force. In the image and likeness of our Source, we are evolving creatures. Like consciousness Itself, we are moving forever in the direction of greater complexity, greater Unity, greater cooperation, greater Life. In order to continue along our evolutionary trajectory, we have to get up...we have to move forward...we have

to adapt to change as it occurs. The real choice is whether to do it willingly, by my own spiritual authority and agency, or not.

So, what can I do to increase my connection to, or awareness of, my inherent resilience? There are a couple of Practices that are guaranteed to boost your sense of bounce-back when life gets difficult.

First, allow yourself to be supported by Community. We seem to have the tendency to pull away from others when things get difficult. Maybe we're worried we'll bring someone else down...maybe we just don't think we have the energy to be with people. And while that may be true at times, research has shown that one of the best things we can do to increase our resilience is to be in Community. That is what we're here for...to support and uplift one another. Let yourself be held.

Second, be gentle with yourself. Take care of yourself. Eat nourishing food, stay active, and maintain your spiritual practices. I've noticed the tendency in myself and others to pull back from prayer, meditation, and spiritual study in times of great transition or difficulty. This is actually counter to what is helpful. Staying consistent in whatever ways you can will boost your resilience...you'll feel better faster.

Finally, be with your feelings for a period of time; then, change the narrative. Spend time feeling whatever is moving through your emotional body. And then, as the swell of emotion settles, actively look for what is working in your life, or in the world. Focus on the happy part of the story. Consciously guide yourself into a more satisfying tale.

Most of us have a tendency to fear change. And at times it seems like that fear has taken control. But the Truth is that when we are consciously practicing gratefulness for the blessings in our lives, we cannot simultaneously be in fear. Gratitude is a loving state, a giving state. Love and fear cannot coexist. Gratitude Practice is one of the most effective ways to build a sense of resilience. Don't get me wrong...this takes effort. You gotta' wanna'...you have to be willing to let go of the old story and consciously change your focus. But it is totally do-able. Why? Because Love is your True Nature...Strength is who you are...Resilience is an inherent part of you, your Divine Birthright..."factory equipment", as one of my teachers used to say. You were given this life because you are strong enough to live it.

Join me today in knowing your inherent resilience, your inherent strength, your willingness to breathe into whatever stretch life has called you to...to gracefully change and adapt with the flow of life...to be content with what is...and to open yourself to the greater possibility of what can be.


Let's pray – speaking this for myself, and by the Principle of Unity, knowing that it is equally True for you...

Knowing that there is only the One Source...that there has only ever been the One Life...that it fills me to overflowing, and surrounds and infuses every aspect of my being. There is nothing else. All that I see, and that which is beyond sight...all that I hear and all that is imperceptible...all that I sense and that which is beyond all experience...is an emanation of the Living God.


And so I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I Am, that each of us is, a living, breathing, expression of the Divine, walking the earth...the hands and feet of God, the Heart of Compassion and Generosity, the Voice of Truth, the perfect expression of Strength and Resilience... in Service to the Whole.

In this sacred space, I give thanks for the time we have shared here this morning. I am so grateful for the community that supports and uplifts me. Thank you, Spirit, for Your Infinite Intelligence and the Guidance that is so freely given whenever I remember to ask. You flow in and through me as my Highest Knowing. As I open to greater and greater possibility, I become a clear channel through which Wisdom, Joy, and Freedom may flow. As I come to know the Truth of who I Am, my life becomes more Peaceful, more Abundant, and more Harmonious. As I remember that everything I do ripples out to affect the Whole, my life takes on greater meaning and purpose. And by my actions, through your Loving and Lawful Presence, the world is blessed and I am blessed.

Trusting in the power of prayer...not only the spoken Word, but the deep feeling and faith that infuse the Word...I can let it go, trusting in the Loving and Lawful Presence to take it and make it so... even here...even now. And so I release it fully and completely, watching in wonder as it comes into full form in my life and in the lives of each one here. I call it done...and so it is. Amen!

 Music: *You Can Do This Hard Thing*, written by Carrie Newcomer, performed by Dalton Fitzgerald

Offertory:

 *Love Train*, written by Kenneth Gamble & Leon Huff, performed by Home Free

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cHk8th1v3A>

Blessing for the offering: Rev. Diana Johnson

Invitations: Sherri Dotter, RScP

 Closing Song: *Love Be With You*, written by Gary Lynn Floyd, performed by in2it