

Love, Only Love...

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Opening Prayer – Sherri will set the intention to open heart and mind, welcoming whatever is to be awakened today.

Introduction – Diana

Good morning. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. I begin today by welcoming you Home...Home to our Community, and Home to your own Mystic Heart.

I invite you now to get comfortable and settle into the stillness of Taizé, fully arriving, allowing your awareness to rest in this time and place...letting go of everything that has come before this moment...feeling content with what is as you ground yourself in the here and now...nowhere to go, nothing to do. Just be...

Completely at ease as you are carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...allowing the words and music to wash over you...remembering why we are here on earth to begin with...To Love, Serve, and Remember...

Chant – *Love, Serve, and Remember* by John Astin

Our theme for 2021 is *Connection*, and the point of focus for the month of February is *Be the Love*. This morning, we'll be taking a meditative journey into the presence of *Love, Only Love*. Taizé allows us to share in group *Meditation* and *Prayer*. Completing each meditative experience with *Gratitude* and *Joyful Expression*, we honor the Spiritual Practice of *Celebration*.

Let's begin by taking a couple of slow, deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling...allowing Spirit to breathe us...following the breath as it settles into a natural, gentle flow...Now slow the breath down just a little bit more...turning inward to the Light that has never known darkness, to the Peace that has never been disturbed, to the Love that has never been withheld, to the place at the core of your being that feels its Oneness with the Divine. There is only here and now...this sacred moment...as together, we attune ourselves to the high vibration we are co-creating with the Infinite.

As an irreplaceable strand woven into the fabric of Creation, you are a vast being that has never been born and will never die...you are the very image and likeness of pure Spirit. Your Essence is Love.

Slipping fully into the flow of meditation, we acknowledge and experience the Love that is our Essence...we honor the same Love as the Essence of every being, without exception...and we acknowledge our connection with all of Life.

Sense with me a global web of consciousness, each of us a point of Light...all beings, everywhere...who, in this moment, are experiencing communion...all of us, acknowledging the Presence of something vast and mysterious...an Intelligence, an

Infinite Field of Possibility...call It Spirit, Universal Presence, Tao...call It Divine Mother, Holy Father, God...a web of Consciousness in which we find our place, our purpose.

We can feel the collective intention that brought us here...we feel the deep communion with that which is bigger than we are...and we feel the impulse to grow and evolve. It is awakening within us...individually and collectively. As we consciously connect with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered... where two or more are gathered, healing has begun...Wholeness is revealed.

There is a deeper place I can live from, that each of us can live from. We are feeling it right now. Human beings have a generosity of Spirit that is innate...we see this whenever a disaster strikes and people go out of their way to do heroic things, without a second thought. We have witnessed it during this time of pandemic as front-line workers put themselves at risk to feed and care for others. We are, indeed, generous and loving creatures.

The Master Teacher Jesus, in the first century, gave us what is called the first Great Commandment. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." This commandment was cited in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke of the Christian Bible. It was truly revolutionary in its time, as it is in our own.

Of course, Jesus was referring to a much older commandment given in the book of *Deuteronomy* by Moses in the *Old Testament*. We love the teachings of Jesus, but fail to realize that he was often referring to the Hebrew Scriptures of his youth.

And so, this idea of loving God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength is not a new one. Notice, the sacred scriptures do not say to choose how we will love love...it says *all* your heart, *all* your soul, *all* your mind, and *all* your strength.

Take a moment in silence to consider...how would my relationship with my world be different if I took time every day to connect with the *heart of Love, the heart of Compassion*, in myself and in everyone I see...those I meet in person or see on television or in the newspapers?

My Divine Nature also wants me to love through *the expression of my soul*. This is the devotional aspect of Loving. What is my soul? Perhaps the blueprint for my entire Being, for that which is eternal in me...that which is expansive in me. Loving with all of my soul means loving eternally, unconditionally, expansively...not just my life, this body, my family and friends, my nation, my culture...and not just when things are going well.

Soul Love goes beyond personal preferences. In order to *choose* to love with all of my soul, I need to have my heart and mind both fully engaged and ready to make

choices. I need to be ready, willing, and able to *choose* Love when I don't want to, when it is extraordinarily difficult to do so.

Once again, Jesus taught that we should: "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." By perfect, he meant impartial as God is impartial... recognize the Divinity in all beings. Who did you think you were supposed to love?

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Diana

And where does loving God with all of my strength come in? When it is difficult to love, I need all systems working together...my strength, endurance, and effort must join my heart, soul, and mind if I am to succeed in my loving.

In Buddhism, there is an important teaching about effort and strength that may be useful here. From a Buddhist perspective, what should be the purpose and right use of our effort, or will? Only to...

- ♥ prevent unwholesome qualities from arising
- ♥ extinguish unwholesome qualities that have already arisen
- ♥ cultivate wholesome qualities that have not yet arisen
- ♥ strengthen wholesome qualities that have already arisen and taken root

Using my strength, effort, and will in these ways creates in me a loving attitude. When I have a loving attitude, I don't take things or people for granted...I am grateful. I take better care of everything...my body, mind, relationships, home, and planet. As I see the Divine in all that surrounds me, it is easier to Love God, through Its Creation, with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. As I witness the Divinity in all that I see, it takes no effort at all...in that moment, *Love Breathes Through Me*.

Musical Meditation– *Love Breathes Through Me* by Narayan and Janet

Diana

Ahhh...what beautiful poetry...and deep Truth. We are of Love's Creation, our breath is Love's elation...Love is all that we can be. Love God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind and all of your strength.

The Master Teacher also directed me to love my neighbor as myself. But who is my neighbor? Is it the guy who lives next door, or across the street? There is no such thing as distance in Spirit. There is no sense of place or space at all. These are

terms designating separation, and there is no separation in God. God is Wholeness, Unity, Oneness.

An evolutionary perspective would say that *my neighbor* refers to all material form in which life manifests, whether it be my own body, the bodies of other persons, or of animals, trees, soil, or oceans. This commandment charges me to love all physical form...to actively care for and offer compassion, understanding and forgiveness to all form, whether it be my own body, just as it is and just as it isn't...or the guy who cut me off in traffic...or the homeless woman asking for money at the grocery store...or that family member who has said and done unkind things...or that political candidate whose words and actions seem so offensive to me.

These are all my neighbors...these are all your neighbors. Jesus was calling us to put down our criticisms and judgments, of ourselves and others, and to offer the best of ourselves in the world. Not just once in a while, not just when it's easy or convenient, but all the time. *Love, Only Love.*

And he was not the only spiritual Master teaching that we should love God above all else, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Love of God is the most fundamental teaching of Islam. And it teaches that "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his brother what he likes for himself."

In Buddhism..."One should seek for others the happiness one desires for oneself." These are not new ideas. They go back to the beginning of recorded history and are consistent across cultures and traditions. This is what tells us we are dealing with Spiritual Truth.

It surely follows that each of us moves things along in the direction of Healing and Wholeness each time we choose Love. It is *always* a choice and a decision. I challenge you to keep this in mind as you move into your week. Driving in traffic? I choose Love. Standing in a long line at the grocery store? I choose Love. Tired and overwhelmed with all the things on your to-do list this week? I choose Love. Watching the evening news, or reading the newspaper? I choose Love. There is a spark of the Divine in everything. It is all here to remind me...I choose Love. To consciously choose Love is our life's purpose and the goal of all spirituality. When we're conscious, we will always do the loving thing, the kind and compassionate thing,

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Chris –Meditation

I invite you now to consider: "What does Love mean to me? ... Is it an emotion that I feel? ... or is it something beyond feelings?" ... God is Love... yet Spirit is so much more than sentiment, affection, or attachment... Divine Love is vast...

comprehensive... all-inclusive in Its infinity... permeating all of Creation... Feel that Eternal Love holding you now...

Immersed in this boundless sea of Love, let your awareness expand to acknowledge all the other beings that are with you in God's embrace... "Love has made a circle that holds us all inside..." Everyone and everything belongs here... Each of us matters... No one and no thing is left outside the circle... All is Love... Only Love...

We may have a tendency to think that when we learn to love God better, it will become easier to love our fellow humans... but will it? ... Or is it the other way around? ... Maybe we learn to love God by practicing Love toward other people... especially the ones we find it difficult to hold in Love... After all, who is it that needs our Love most?...

As we move into silent meditation, allow all of your life to present itself before you... people... situations... things... environments... emotions... thoughts... Practice holding it all in Love... welcoming all of it... accepting unconditionally... Open your heart wider and wider until you become the source of Unlimited, Divine Love... embracing All That Is as God's Blessing...

Silence – 5:00

With heartfelt gratitude, we give thanks for this experience of Divine Love... Grateful for this experience of Unconditional Acceptance, we open our hearts more and more fully to receive this Spiritual Gift... All is God... All is Love... Only Love...

Thank you, God, for everything...

Please affirm with me that our thoughts, words, and actions align with our deepest spiritual intention, and that we are all inspired daily to give full expression to the gifts given us. The light of our souls shines brightly as we express powerful spiritual qualities in the world.

The Unconditional Love of God opens our hearts and minds, even as It inspires Rev. Diana's words this morning... With deep gratitude we allow ourselves to be transformed by the Power of Love... Only Love...

Diana – Invitation to Practice

Continuing with the meditative tone of Taizé...we give our focused attention to the Spiritual Quality of *Love, Only Love*. As I attend to the Quality of Love within me and all around me, it becomes the dominant atmosphere in my experience.

Living my life from *Love*, from self-givingness, no matter what is happening around me, offers the valuable gift of Whole-hearted Compassion. As I allow Love to guide me, I Am living in the image and likeness of the Divine Mother, of the Blessed Father...there is nothing wrong, nothing broken, nothing missing. I Am at Peace.

Today, I invite you into a Practice that will lead you to greater Love. We know that whatever we give our attention to expands in our experience. And so we take a moment to center ourselves in the Awareness that we are God's Love expressing. Breathe that into every aspect of your being. I Am God's Love expressing. It has no other channel through which to flow...I Am a conduit for Divine Love. Let that Love flow through you, carried on the breath as it moves in and out of your body. The breath is an access point of your Eternal Nature.

I gently guide my mind into my deepest, most silent place...into my heart, and there stand in the presence of God. (Pause) I enter willingly into true solitude...

It is here, in the depths of my heart and soul that I find my Divinity infusing my humanity...entwined as One. As I sit in the silence, I touch the place where Spiritual Understanding dwells...and I Am filled with a sense of deep communion.

It is in this place that I feel the Presence of the One Loving and Compassionate Source. It is here that I sense and know that I Am a perfect expression of the Divine...that I Am intentionally created so that God might experience Itself as me.

And so, I grant this opportunity to the One...to experience and express Its inherent Compassion. I allow my mind to gently call forward the image of someone in my life...someone for whom forgiveness seems difficult...someone that may have said or done things in my life that felt hurtful...I take a moment now to bring my full attention to this One.

I allow any feelings that have come with this image to soften...and as I bring my full attention to this person. What's it like to be you?

Just like me, this person is seeking happiness for his or her life. I breathe that in...

Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his or her life. Breathe...

Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness, and despair. Breathe...

Just like me, this person is seeking to fulfill his or her needs. Breathe...

Just like me, this person is learning about life.

With my heart wide open, and compassion flowing, I speak this prayer: I love you, I bless you, I release you from all judgment. I trust that like me, you are finding your way.

Thank you, God, for Your many gifts and for my growing compassion. There is no Love but Yours, and that Love is boundless. I know that it is by Your Grace that I Am lifted, that my mind is purified and my heart is opened. Recognizing our Oneness, I quietly receive Your Peace today. I surrender completely to Your Love, allowing it to guide me from this moment forward. In deepest gratitude and Absolute Faith, I speak my Word and release it to the Mighty Power of the Universe, calling forth all that is Holy, all that is Whole, here and now. I let it be and it is done...And so it is...Amen!

Musical Meditation – *Love Cover Me* by Gary Lynn Floyd

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Diana - Moving into Celebration

As time has unfolded me, it has revealed to me Life's nothing less than sublime.

With every thought I make, every last breath I take, may I be gracious and kind.

Love, I invite you to open up this heart of mine...Love cover me, light any darkness...Love cover me, right every wrong. Cause me to see Love over hatred, guide me to be faithful and strong...Love cover me.

Let's take a moment again this week to envision a Love-Soaked world, a world that is peaceful, joyful, and kind...where everybody has enough to eat, a warm place to sleep at night, and a sense of belonging and contribution. A world created by our willingness to practice bold and courageous Love. Doesn't it make you want to smile? Hold onto the Vision...hold onto the smile...hold onto the Love as you bring your awareness back to your body...to your senses...to the atmosphere in the room. As you feel ready, allow your eyes to gently open and take in whatever is before you. Move your body a little bit if you'd like, to reconnect your awareness to our shared space.

We can do this thing. With hearts brimming over, we gradually step into the final few minutes of our gathering...together, we Practice gratitude for, and celebration of one another in Community. We give thanks for this joyful and prayerful experience; we are so deeply grateful to have Spiritual Family, a Spiritual Community, to share our lives with. "Wherever there is true belonging and genuine sharing, God is present." (Brother David Steindl-Rast)

We are creating a new story. Together, we practice seeing the Divine in all that is, and in seeing a world where all human gifts are shared and appreciated.

Mystic Heart's Beloved Community is creating space for such people to gather and find support and encouragement. Our wide-scale Vision is ***Practicing the Possible Through Prayer***. We know that Peace is possible, Love is possible, and living from our principles is possible. This is our Work. We are committed to ***Living from our Divinity... empowering our lives, and creating authentic, loving Community through heartfelt Study, Service, Celebration, and Prayer***.

Authentic, loving Community is who we are, it's what we do. I love that this Community is a living, breathing organism...that it is an Independent Spiritual Center, free to grow and change according to the needs and desires of its members and friends...that it welcomes all who are drawn to be here...that it is open to all faith paths, philosophical points of view, and ways of life that acknowledge and honor the Divine, and support and uplift the growth and evolution of the planet and its beings.

As *Spiritual Independents*, we endeavor to follow in the footsteps of the Master Teacher Jesus and other evolved beings. We stand on the shoulders of the New Thought Leaders and the Transcendentalists before them; and we honor the Perennial and Indigenous Wisdom Teachings of the ages. We acknowledge the common threads that run through all Wisdom traditions and carry them forward, offering principles and practices that are free of dogma and practical for the 21st century.

As our time draws to a close, I want to acknowledge today as the 12th day of the sacred season of Lent. The word *Lent* derives from the Anglo-Saxon and is the word for spring, which is a verb meaning to lengthen. The season of Lent begins in the spring when the days become noticeable longer. In recent times the celebration of fasting and feasting has been set at 40 days to honor the 40 days of prayer and fasting that the master teacher Jesus spent in the wilderness dealing with temptations of mind and body. The number 40 has been called sacred by many spiritual traditions, and is a symbol of spiritual completion, of the time it takes for a new state of consciousness to be reached...as long as it takes.

Lent is a season of spiritual growth, a time for progressive unfoldment, for the expansion of awareness and the raising of consciousness. On the altar this morning, you see the symbols of new life, the new life that will emerge as daily we fast from negative thinking in all forms and focus instead on Spiritual Truth. But in order to shift our thinking, we need to first recognize the thoughts that most often plague us so that we can let go of them and replace them with Truth. You will be invited, as we draw closer to Easter Sunday and our *New Life Blooming* Celebration, to begin to notice the thoughts and thought patterns that most often get in your way so that you can replace them with Truth...more on that as we get closer to Easter Sunday.

For now, let's get on with our Celebration! As a community, we celebrate by giving thanks for all of life's blessings. Together, we express our gratitude to God and to one another. This is a vital part of our Spiritual Practice. The sacred scriptures of the world treat celebration as a holy, creative act, an act of worship and devotion to the One Source of all of Life. By celebrating, we feel and express our inherent Joy. So from the bottom of my heart, I thank you for joining us this morning for our time of devotion...of honoring the Divine, honoring Life, honoring ourselves and honoring one another...and celebrating the Joy of Life together. Today's music video is a real treat!

Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Each Sunday, we offer you the opportunity to share your financial Good, in support of the Work we are doing in the world. You can go to **mysticheart.org** to use our Donate Button or to find our mailing address.

We also have a Gracious Giving Program for those who would like to make a heartfelt monthly commitment of support so that we can more effectively plan for our growth and our monthly spending. I would be happy to give you more information.

As we move into this time of giving, please feel the Truth of these words, and know how much we appreciate your gifts:

As I awaken to the God within me and all around me, I see Abundance everywhere I look. I consciously step into that flow of Abundance by this act of giving. I bless this gift, sending it forth to heal and prosper. It is evidence of my deep faith. It does good work in the world and blesses all of Creation. I give from a consciousness of Abundance! And so it is! Amen!

I know you will be touched by this video...Jews, Christians, and Muslims who had never met before, gathered at midnight in the Tower of David in Jerusalem after the final day of Ramadan, to sing one song in three languages and three-part vocal harmony. And as it draws to a close, prepare to boogie.

Offertory Video – *One Love* by Bob Marley

Closing Gratitude and Benediction

Sherri, Prayer Practitioner: Brief Invitations

- **Tuesdays, 3:00-4:30 pm – *The Book of Joy*, a book club facilitated by Michael Bordeaux.**
- **Thursdays, 3:00-5:00 pm - *Metaphysical Bible*, an on-going circle. Chris Netto is offering Tai Chi on Thursdays via Zoom. Please contact Chris at standingfirmfitness.com for more information.**
- **Fridays, 2:00-5:00, starting this week (March 5th) – *The Celestine Prophecy: A Deeper Dive*, a class facilitated by Rev. Diana.**
- **Selected Saturdays:**
 - **March 6, 10 am – 1 pm – *Mystic Morning Brew* with Prayer Practitioner, Lucinda Alton.**
 - **March 13, 10 am – noon – *Praying in Color...Rock On* with Ellie Thompson. Come and learn how to turn prayer into art...this month we will be rock painting as Spiritual Practice.**
- **Sunday Taizé Meditation Experience, 10 am each week.**
- **All activities and services are available via Zoom. Also, as we have moved into the red tier, we have between 8-12 seats available for each activity, with physical distancing in place for in-person attendance. You must reserve your seat ahead of time with Rev. Diana. Check our website, mysticheart.org, for more information and for all of our Zoom links.**

We want to share what we have with others, so please invite folks to check out our website. The power of invitation is one of the ways we grow our community.

11:12 Closing Song: *Love Be with You* by Gary Lynn Floyd and Lainey Bernstein

11:15 Close of Service