

What Do We Leave Behind?

with Sherri Dotter, RScP, Prayer Practitioner, and Chris Johnson, RScP Leading the Meditation

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 – Rev. Diana

Good morning. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center, and I welcome you Home to our Beloved Community...and Welcome Home to your own Mystic Heart. Thank you for joining us this morning. I have a question for you this morning. Once we begin the meditation, can you remain still, eyes closed, until the announcement of the celebration? And if you do, will it make a difference in the depth of your experience? I invite you to try it and let me know what happens.

I invite you to let go of all that has come before this moment...gently close your eyes and get really comfortable in your body, allowing it to relax and be fully supported...begin by putting both hands over your heart, making a firm contact so that you can feel your heartbeat. Allow your head to fall just a bit, feeling yourself surrender into this moment...and as you breathe, allow the breath to infuse the heart with its Life-giving Power, to awaken and open the heart, preparing it to receive whatever is here for you today...

As we continue to breathe as one, let any resistance fall away, let go of any tension...anything that might disturb your Peace...as together we feel the presence of our Collective Heart. Let us take what is Good in our lives and give it our full attention and gratitude...Let us listen to all that is spoken, both within and without, through the Wisdom of the Heart...now letting the hands gently fall to your lap and breathing in Love...holding it for just a moment and sending that Love into the room on the outbreath. Feel the Love...feel the Peace...feel the stillness.

There is Freedom in stillness...a Freedom that says, "This is the real you. Just be you. Just be...that is enough".

Feel and know the Wholeness, the Completeness, of this moment as you allow yourself to be carried by the meditative tone of Taizé...allow the music to take you deeper as you remember Who and Whose you are...

Chant – *God Is, I Am* by Eddie Watkins, Jr.

Rev. Diana –

With eyes still closed, we bring our awareness to our *Connection*... in July we are acknowledging this Truth...*Life is the Practice*...and today's meditative journey asks

the question *What Do We Leave Behind* when we commit to a life of Spiritual devotion and connectedness?

As one by one, we shed what no longer serves us, we experience more and more of our inherent *Freedom*. Today we give some attention to the God Quality of *Freedom*. As we prepare to go deeper, ask Spirit to reveal...what is *Freedom*? What does it look like in my life? What does it feel like in my body, in my mind? Take whatever is revealed and draw it into your heart...feel the *Freedom* permeate your breath as you inhale, and then exhale. As we breathe together, sensing our inherent *Freedom*, we are lifting the vibration for ourselves and our world.

Freedom is the natural state of all beings everywhere...Infinite Intelligence, expressing and experiencing Its agency as all of creation...constant, and yet ever-changing. It is *that Freedom*, *that Spiritual Authority*, that guides the process of Creation unfolding. It is *that Freedom* that is expressing and experiencing Itself as you...as me...we recognize and honor the *Freedom* granted to all beings, as Divine Birthright. In order to live as Free beings, we must accept ourselves as Holy and our world as Sacred. In the book of Exodus, God speaks to Moses: "Do not come any closer...Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." We need nothing. All that is required is given. As we come to know and embody these powerful words, we are changed from the inside out...and life on earth is forever changed. We leave our lasting imprint...we make a difference.

We take a moment to sense our connection with all of Life...to feel the Oneness of our global community. Together, we envision a web of consciousness, completely encompassing our beautiful Mother Earth...We see each member of our human family as a Radiant point of Light in that web...

And now we sense the Light getting brighter as we recognize that all beings, not only humans, carry that Light and are part of that web...the Light gets brighter still as we see that in Truth there are no spaces between us...as we begin to see all life forms glowing with the Divine Spark, our web becomes one ever-expanding field of Light that extends out beyond our beautiful planet, into the cosmos...no beginning, no ending...

Filled to overflowing with this amazing Light, we share a heartfelt intention for our time together...to spend time experiencing our Wholeness and our Oneness; to find and experience our inherent *Freedom*; and to acknowledge our responsibility to one another as members of one human family, and as stewards of this beautiful planet. Each of us feels the impulse to grow and evolve, and chooses to do so consciously.

Acknowledging our connection with all of life lends Power to our prayer and meditation...collectively, we create a ripple of Compassion and Caring, of Peace and Joy, of Beauty and Grace, that directly imprints upon the Whole for all time...we give

shape and form to the transformation that is occurring...Freedom is being revealed by means of us. We are Love in action.

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Rev. Diana

Continuing with eyes closed, listening with the inner ear, we return to the passage from the book of Exodus...

“Do not come any closer...Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

Brother David Steindl-Rast sees life as a pilgrimage. And what is a pilgrimage? From its Latin roots, it is “a journey through a foreign land”. And from its more modern interpretation, it is a “long journey to a sacred place for religious reasons.” So we might understand Bro. David’s metaphor to imply that simply by living our individual life, we are engaging in Sacred Practice, one that is filled with the unknown, as moment by moment, we step into something new...something never before experienced. And that by doing so consciously, with curiosity, wonder, and a willingness to let go of that which is already done, we are living religiously...in a way that keeps us awake and connected to the Truth of who we are.

Interesting that the verb used for “taking off” the shoes more closely resembles our English word “to shed”, as an animal sheds its skin. Shedding is a natural process...a letting go of what limits us. Of course, shedding is a little bit uncomfortable at first, as new skin, or new ways or being, are revealed.

We might have been taught that the passage from Exodus is telling us to take off our shoes *because* the ground is holy, as a way of honoring what is sacred. But Hebrew scholars say that we have it all backwards...that it is when we take off our shoes that we *notice* that the ground is Holy. When we are willing to let go, to surrender, to shed what no longer serves us, our awareness is enhanced.

It has long been part of the race thought that it is hard to let go, that surrender implies a loss of control, that changing old habits and patterns is really challenging. I have a question for you...what if it didn’t have to be difficult? What if it could be easy...Graceful? What if it is only our belief that it has to be hard...has to take a long time...that is making it so in our experience? Is it possible that it is our resistance to change and our need for things to be a certain way that make the shedding so uncomfortable? And are we truly willing to entertain what it would look like, and feel like, if it was easy? Are we willing to *Let It Be Easy*?

Musical Meditation– *Let it Be Easy* by Rev. Diana Johnson

Rev. Diana

With eyes still closed, we hear again, this time more deeply...

“Do not come any closer...Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

What if this passage is telling us that drawing closer to Spirit, closer to our True Nature, requires that we shed our shoes? Remember that at the time this passage was written, shoes were made from dead animal skin. Each of us has “dead skin” to shed...outdated ideas, beliefs, habits, and circumstances that are no longer serving us, that have gotten in the way of our remembering that it is ALL Holy Ground. We tend to see our lives as filled with mistakes, with things we might have done differently, roads we should have taken. This tendency toward regret is another of the things we must shed. It took all of it to get us to this point in our journey, to serve us in becoming who we are today.

Each of us has been standing on Holy Ground every step of the way. Everything in our lives has unfolded perfectly, in Divine Order and Timing, guided by the Unseen Hand...and it continues to unfold as an Intentional and Purposeful expression of the Divine. The illusion of our being separate from one another, and from our Creator, has left us with the sense that something is missing...that there is something we must do or become. This is simply a distraction...yet another thing to shed in order to step into our full Spiritual Authority.

Each of us is more awake today that we were yesterday. It becomes more and more difficult to ignore the nudgings of Spirit. And it grows easier and easier to remember that every moment is an opportunity to enjoy, to experience, to grow, and to give. As we grow into our fullness, we become more aware of the places that are out of alignment, and we willingly bring ourselves back more quickly, more Gracefully.

SILENCE – 2 Minutes – Bell

Chris – Meditation

In this atmosphere of willingness and receptivity, we open our hearts to new possibility... willing to imagine a new way of being... A way of living that allows us to fully express both our human self and our Divine Self... A way that integrates our humanity and our spirituality...

There is no disconnection between the human and spiritual realms... Humankind is the expression of Spirit in the world of time and space... The trouble is that we express God imperfectly... Once we take human form, we are prone to take on the beliefs of those around us, healthy or not, true or false, wise or foolish...

As we grow, we learn that we have to get more... get more knowledge... get more understanding... get more money... get more and more... And as we add layer upon layer, the Light of Spirit trying to shine forth from us is more and more veiled... Even the good that we seek adds layers to the shroud...

Perhaps adding more to ourselves isn't the answer... Maybe what mysticism calls the *via negativa* – the negative way – is more effective... Releasing thought patterns and mental habits that are no longer useful... Releasing things we no longer need... Releasing resentments and hurt feelings through forgiveness... Releasing our idea of how it *should* be and accepting the way it is...

Let us take these questions into the Silence: “What is one thing I can let go of that will make me feel closer to God? ... Do I need to forgive myself or someone for some perceived wrong? ... What must I release in order to fully accept that my life is perfect, just as it is, and just as it isn't?” ...

Silence – 3:00

We are grateful for this time of sweet release and communion with Spirit and our Beloved Community... We give thanks for all that Life has given us, knowing that it is all perfect and serves to grow our spirits...

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 this world.

We release any barriers and listen with open hearts and minds as Spirit speaks to us through Rev. Diana, in faith that all that we need is given freely, and all that we don't need dissolves away, becoming that which we leave behind...

Rev. Diana – Invitation to Practice

We take a few moments now for contemplation, and for deep listening. We invite the Still Small Voice to make Itself known in our hearts and minds...to reveal Its Wisdom so that we might align ourselves more closely with Its Highest Idea for our lives.

Allowing our own minds to rest, resisting the temptation to figure anything out, or to respond with what we already think we know, we let go now and ask of Spirit:

What is it that I Am being called to shed so that my life can become more and more Peaceful, Fulfilled, and Free?

Am I willing to do the work required, to participate fully, so that transformation can occur in my life?

What changes are being called into for?

Am I willing to live with the discomfort of change as I grow more fully into mySelf?

Please join me in prayer...to claim and know Graceful Transformation, right here, right now...

As I relax into my deepest remembering, I feel and know that there is always and forever One Thing happening, and that is God, the Infinite Intelligence back of everything, expressing and experiencing Itself as Its Creation. That's it...nothing more...God living Its life as me, as you, as every animal, every plant, every rock, and grain of sand...as every drop of water in the ocean and every star in the heavens...as all that I would call Good and Beautiful...as all that I would call bad or ugly...as all that I would call Loving and Generous, and all that would appear to be hateful and greedy. There is a spark of the Divine in all of it. There is Order and Purpose, whether I can see it or not. The place that I walk is ALWAYS Holy Ground. Every person along my path is Sacred, every circumstance has a gift to offer. And I, myself, am a perfectly created expression of God, made in Its image and likeness. When I cannot see the Divinity in myself, in another person or situation, it is my own limited perspective getting in the way. The Truth is always True. The place whereon I stand is Holy Ground.

Here and now, I breathe that in...I let go of any resistance, any internal argument that this is so. I accept the sanctity of life...mine and all others. I honor each step, each decision, each relationship, and circumstance as necessary, as Holy. I experience and know my inherent Freedom, and honor the Freedom of others. I accept the responsibility that my Freedom implies. I walk each step grounded in a sense of connection...that we are connected by bonds that can never be broken, for we are One in Spirit.

I know that the Power of my thoughts, words, and actions is mighty, and that I Am forever channeling the Power of creation...consciously or not. Here and now, I commit to play my part consciously...to do my spiritual work...to open my heart where it has become closed...to see through the veil of separation that threatens to blind me to the Truth.

Thank you, Spirit, for reminding me who I Am. I listen with heart wide open. For this is the deepest kind of prayer. Thank you for the inherent capacity to embody and live from that Truth. Thank you for my evolving faith...I know that it allows me to welcome and embrace the changes that are forever within and around me. And thank you for the Grace and Ease that permeate my experience in every moment. I Am showered in Blessing; I Am filled to overflowing. I pray that I might bless all who cross my path in this coming week.

Knowing and trusting in the immense Power of my word, and fully expecting that it creates my experience here and now, I release this prayer to the Loving Intelligence that I call God, knowing absolutely that it has already responded, active and moving my words into form, in more Beautiful ways than I can imagine...in ways that serve the Whole of Creation. And so, I rest...I lay it down, calling it done...And so it is...Amen!

Musical Meditation – *Love is Still the Answer* by Jason Mraz

Rev. Diana - Moving into Ceremony and Celebration

As we prepare to let go of what no longer serves, let's take a moment, with eyes still closed, to acknowledge that Love is Still, and will be for all time, the answer...the way for us to create ***Love-Soaked World***. Together, we envision it now...a world completely transformed by all of the good we are doing, individually and collectively...a world that is peaceful, joyful, abundant, and free...where all beings live as brothers and sisters, caring for one another and our beautiful planet as the Sacred beings that we are...a world where everyone has access to plenty of nourishing food, a warm and comfortable home, medical care, education and creative contribution, and a sense of belonging...a world in which every being is valued for his or her inherent Goodness, Beauty, and Perfection...a world created by our willingness to practice Radical Love and Compassion, Integrity, Forgiveness, Kindness, and Generosity.

Let this Vision become Real in your heart and mind. Together we feel it...know it...and live it. There is no lack or limitation in God...there is no separation between any of God's expressions. With humanity as Its hands, feet, voice, and heart, doing Its work in the world, all things are possible.

Now hold onto that Vision...and let it bring a smile to your face and Joy to your heart as you gently 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.

We know that holding a shared Vision is a powerful form of prayer. We are building our Faith in the *More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible* (book title by Charles Eisenstein). Please join me in affirming (let's say it together) ...

***We're building a more beautiful world...
A Love-Soaked World...
We are doing it here...
We are doing it now...
And so it is!***

Thank you for joining me in this Powerful Practice every week. Together, we are

Practicing the Possible Through Prayer.

We are so grateful to be a part of this Beloved Community. Mystic Heart is an Independent Spiritual Center that is self-governed by Community Agreements, and is free to grow and change according to the needs and desires of its members and friends. If you'd like to know more about our philosophy, we have a full description printed in our monthly bulletin. Also, I am always happy to answer any questions you may have.

Celebration is a vital part of our Mission and our Spiritual Practice. We know that life is meant to be Joyful, that we are meant to experience the Goodness of being alive. We understand that by celebrating the Good in our lives, we bring more of it into our experience. I celebrate you and your choice to be here this morning. I celebrate each and every person who contributes time, talent, or treasure to our Beloved Community.

Rev. 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'm binging on Jason Mraz right now...this song speaks to my heart, and to where I believe we are being Called...In honor of our Sacred Mother, let's go...

Offertory Video – *Back to the Earth*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8xW2nkGMMw>

Sherri opens the brief Gratitude Prayer, Rev. Diana closes.

Sherri, Prayer Practitioner

If you are new with us today, please consider filling out an information card so that we can reach out. If you'd like prayer support, we also have prayer request cards and envelopes for your privacy. All of the Mystic Heart events and activities are listed in your bulletin, so feel free to take it with you. To continue the celebration, there is food and fellowship next door immediately following the service. So let's stand and sing our closing song.

Closing Song: *Love Be with You*, written by Lainey Bernstein, RScP and Gary Lynn Floyd

Close of Service