

Be Like a Child...

Sunday, January 23, 2022 Taizé



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Opening Prayer – Chris

Introduction –Diana

Good morning. My name is Rev. Diana Johnson, Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. Welcome Home to our Beloved Community, and welcome Home to your own Mystic Heart. Let's prepare ourselves to *Be Like a Child* by sharing this affirmation, "I open my eyes to see the Spiritual Truth today." "I open my ears to hear the Spiritual Truth today." "I open my heart to receive the Spiritual Truth today." Bringing our voices together as one, we acknowledge the Blessings that each of us brings to the world.

Chant – *Blessing to the World*, written by Karen Drucker

Rev. Diana

This morning we are contemplating what it means to *Be Like a Child* and asking, "How does this help me in moving through life as a Spiritual Being?"

Let's begin with a deep cleansing breath...breathing in to rejuvenate body, mind, and spirit...and then breathing out, letting go of any tension that you might be carrying in your body...breathing the Peace and the Presence that is in this space, and offering that Peace and Presence into this space on the outbreath...bringing full awareness to the breath as it finds its own pace and flow...feeling God's Presence as it moves in and out of your body on the breath...allowing everything to be exactly as it is, allow yourself to be exactly as you are...Whole, Perfect, Complete, Content...nothing missing or broken in you...God's Perfect and necessary Expression as part of the Whole.

Join me in recognizing our ever-present connection with our Global Community...envisioning a web of Consciousness that encompasses the earth, acknowledging each and every being as a point of God's Radiant Light. We feel our own Radiance, and we sense the same spark in every human...

Every human being, without exception, is a perfect expression of God. We extend our Light to all of Nature as part of the web...every creature, every plant, every rock...the sand, soil, and water...the entire planet, down to the smallest microorganism, all shining with the Light of Spirit...teeming with Life and Intelligence. Our web has become more like a tightly woven fabric...the fabric of Creation. We

extend our Vision further still...into the heavens...the clouds, the stars, and the galaxies...Divine Light stretching out in all directions...and we acknowledge our oneness with this One Eternal and Omnipresent Life.

Feeling our Connection to everything and everyone, we share a heartfelt intention for our time together. We acknowledge our responsibility to one another as human family, and as caretakers of the earth's animals, plants, and working systems; and we begin again...with beginner's mind... as we learn to *Be Like a Child*.

In setting this prayerful intention, we empower ourselves to see, hear, and feel the Spiritual Truth that by emptying ourselves of all we think we know, we make room for new ideas, new ways of speaking and acting...we make room for the Creative Process to transform us.

In the Christian Scriptures, we find at least two passages that speak to this Spiritual Truth. From the book of Mark, "Truly, I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

And from Matthew, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in my name welcomes me."

In both passages, it is Rabbi Jesus speaking. In finding deeper meaning in his words, let's consider what it might mean to be like a child. Before being tainted by life's experiences, children are open and curious. The child-like mind believes that all things are possible and has an inherent faith that all needs will be met. It never questions whether or not it is deserving of all good things. A child gives itself easily to play, to what brings it joy. It is caring and displays an inherent empathy, sharing what it has with others.

These are some of the qualities we are encouraged to revisit as we *Become Like a Child*. Going into the silence, we call these qualities to mind, and we look for where they are present in our lives...openness...curiosity...faith...deservingness... playfulness... joyfulness... generosity... empathy.

SILENCE – 1 Minute – Bell

Rev. Diana

There are other qualities inherent in childhood that seem to get lost as we grow into adulthood. A young child carries an innocence and seems to know that all is well. It is forgiving and does not hold grudges. Children are drawn to nature. They love to be outdoors, and they are in awe of God's Creation. They have an inherent sense of the Sacred in and as Nature. And they move through the world as if they are part of Nature.

A child is perfectly happy to live from its uniqueness, to be authentic, to not conform to others. This makes children naturally courageous. Humanistic Psychologist Rollo May spoke these wise words: “Courage is not the opposite of cowardice; rather, it is the opposite of conformity.” In their willingness to simply be themselves, children are inherently audacious.

Going again into the silence, we call these qualities to mind, and we look for where they are present in our lives... innocence... trust... forgivingness... awe... oneness with Nature... authenticity... courage... audacity...

SILENCE – 1 Minute – Bell

Rev. Diana

Returning now to the teachings of Jesus...

“Truly, I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it,” and “Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in my name welcomes me.”

What do these words have to offer our contemplation today? First, what is the kingdom of heaven? In the words of the Rabbi, it is both *within* and *at hand*. In other words, the kingdom of heaven is a Peaceful and Powerful state of heart and mind that allows Love to become our experience. It is a way of perceiving the world. And it is a choice. Living in the Kingdom of Heaven is a choice.

The Jewish/Christian mythologies that are prevalent in Western Culture, whether Old Testament or New, clearly demonstrate the simple lessons in Truth that we are still working on today. What are they?

1. We are children of God, Divine beings, inherently Sacred, inherently loved.
2. We are always at choice.
3. When we choose from fear, we experience one set of consequences – anger, hatred, limitation, violence (internal or external)...in other words, separation. From Source and one another.
4. When we choose from Love, we experience a different set of consequences – compassion, forgiveness, abundance, peace, contentment, freedom...in other words, Unity...Oneness.

We are always at choice. In the second Creation Story of the Old Testament, we chose our way out of the Garden of Eden and are still trying to find our way back. Some scholars say that these stories are illustrations of man’s growing capacity for self-reflection as the frontal cortex developed. Rather than being driven by instinct, we could now make choices that went against our highest good.

Later, in the New Testament, Jesus used parables to once again illustrate that our thoughts, words, and actions often lead us straight out of the Kingdom...*and* that we have the power to choose our way back in.

Musical Meditation – *Woodstock*, by Joni Mitchell

Rev. Diana

We've got to get ourselves back to the Garden...We have the power to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And *Being Like a Child* is a good place to start.

It is important to remember that the Jewish/Christian mythologies are Eastern teachings, stories passed down by word of mouth, as Guiding stories to help an exiled people find their bearings. As the Hebrew people moved from place to place, these stories offered a sense of connection to time...connection to those who came before, to rituals and practices that grounded a nomadic people. And the stories, being Eastern, were symbolic...were filled with metaphor, allegory, poetry...they were never meant to be taken as literal history.

At the same time that these stories were being spoken and transcribed, the Ancient Egyptians, Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists were also telling their tales. Here is a story by al-Ghazzali, from the Sufi Tradition that aligns closely with the teachings of Jesus.

“A sheikh said, ‘if you wish to become a saint, change your character into the character of children.’ ‘Why?’ he was asked. ‘Children have five qualities,’ he answered, ‘and if adults had these same qualities, they would attain the rank of saints.

1. They do not worry about their daily bread.
2. When they fall sick, they do not complain night and day about their misfortune.
3. Whatever food they have, they share.
4. When they fight or quarrel, they do not keep grudges in their hearts, but make up quickly.
5. The slightest threat makes them frightened and brings tears to their eyes.’

‘We may not desire to become saints but entering the year with the innocence of a child generates fresh perspectives and creative options.’”

“Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

What does it mean to humble oneself? Humble comes from the same root as humus, which means ground, or earth. Humus is porous, open...

it takes in water and is rich in nutrients. It also shares the same root with *human*. Could humbling oneself like a child mean acknowledging the human capacity for error? Could it be asking us to become open and vulnerable?

“And whoever receives one such child in my name welcomes me.”

And they who take back their child-like qualities, by their own Divine Authority, allow the Christ Nature to shine through.

Chris –Meditation

I invite you to bring to mind a newborn infant you have known... so small... so helpless... so vulnerable... so pure and innocent... We all came into the world that way... truly humble... Not yet able to take care of ourselves, we were completely dependent on our parents... particularly on our Mother...

Infant humans are born into a world of complete Unity... Babies see their mothers as just another part of the one shared body... There is no separation... We are all born One with our human source... The Spiritual Journey is a quest to regain that feeling of Unity with our Divine Source... But how did we lose it to begin with?

We have been born into a Story of Separation... We are taught that I am separate from you... you are separate from me... and we are both separate from the Earth and her other creatures... According to this story, we are even separate from God... kicked out of the Garden forever... and why?... For separating our experience into good things and bad things...

Shakespeare wrote, “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so...” Humans thought up the Story of Separation... good/bad, me/you, us/them... But it’s a fiction... We had it right when we were babies... We **are** connected to one another... We **are** parts of the same body... Together, we are the human body of Divine Spirit...

So our task is to extricate ourSelf from the Old Story, and create a new, more empowering story... a story of Love... Compassion... Unity... Justice... Peace... A story in which cooperation is the norm... Where we realize that helping our neighbor helps our community, all of humanity, and ultimately ourSelf... What would the world look like if we all acted for the highest good of everyone and everything? ... As we move into the Sacred Silence, let us imagine that world together ...

Silence – 3:00

In gratitude for the music that gently brings us back to the present moment, we regain awareness of our surroundings... of the people here with us... We are grateful to sense one another’s presence without losing our feeling of Unity... We are indeed One... Thank you God, for everything and everyOne...

I invite you to know with me that Spirit is moving powerfully through each of us, and through our Beloved Community... Individually and collectively, we are a powerful

spiritual influence on our world... As we evolve in consciousness, the benefits of our growth ripple out, blessing the entire world...

As Rev. Diana continues with her inspired message, we listen with the trusting, open hearts of children... Adopting the new Story of Unity... A story in which we each are empowered to be who we really are... a Child of God...

Rev. Diana

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke of a Hopi Elder who suggested that when visioning, we should be willing to stop, consider, change, and correct. These things come naturally to young children. First of all, they are forever dreaming, visioning. Children are aware of whether or not their actions are having the desired result. If they are not, they stop...consider what a better course might be...change their action, and course correct until the desired outcome is reached.

See if this isn't true...a three-year-old is envisioning the cookie jar...sees himself up on a chair and taking a cookie. He will move the furniture around, climb the cupboard shelves, or whatever, to try to get to that cookie jar. When that doesn't work, he might ask Mom, who says, "No, it's too close to dinnertime." *That didn't work.* So, he throws a tantrum, which lands him in bed. *That didn't work, either.* Finally, after calming down and reconsidering, he asks his big sister to get him a cookie. Score!

The longer we live, the more difficult it seems to be to stop the thought patterns and habitual behaviors long enough to consider consequences and alternatives, and the more challenging it is to change our minds and correct our actions.

That is our work here...we are changing the negative thought patterns so that our perceptions can change. And as our perceptions change, our behaviors and experiences change. Once we feel more confident in who we are and how our life is unfolding, we begin to be drawn to something more...this is where psychological, emotional development branches into spiritual development. We come to understand that we are guided and empowered by a spiritual force that has an infinite capacity, and that we can draw from It whenever we are clear enough to do so. As our thoughts and feelings continue to be purified by our Meditation, Prayer, Study, and Service, we begin to feel and know our Oneness with God and with one another. This is the Spiritual Path...this is why we're here.

Let's join our hearts in prayer. Hold these words as the Truth in your life.

There is, has always been, and will ever be, one Source...one Life...and I call this One God.

I know that God is forever *expressing* Itself and *experiencing* Itself as Its creation...all of Its creation...and so I am and must be a perfect and intentional

expression of the Divine, come to walk this earth in service. My hands and feet, heart and voice, do the work of God...each one of us in our own unique way, offering our God-given gifts as blessings to the world.

Where two or more are gathered in prayer, there among them is the Spirit of God. And so now, in community, we pray our vision into being. We envision a world that is completely transformed by our individual and collective intention and action, and by our commitment to living prayerfully...a world that is peaceful, abundant, beautiful, and free...where all beings practice loving kindness and treat our planet with care and respect. We envision a world where all needs are met...where all beings have plenty of nourishing food, the safety of a warm and comfortable home, medical care, education, healthy relationships, right livelihood, creative contribution, and a sense of belonging...a world in which every being is valued for its inherent Goodness and Light...where the Peace we cultivate and feel within shows up in the world. We feel and know a world without greed, where there is abundance in having *enough*...where every being, as a precious creation of God, is deserving of all the blessings life has to offer, and receives those blessings willingly and gratefully. Breathe that in for a moment...

As we place our faith in the infallible givingness of God, and offering our heartfelt Vision, the world is changed...shifted...lifted in consciousness...and for this knowing, I give thanks.

I am so grateful for all of life's Abundance, Joy, Beauty and Grace.

I give thanks for all who are here today in community.

And I Am profoundly grateful for all of the blessings of this and every day.

By this act of prayer, we *Become Like Children*...trusting that our needs are always met...practicing gratitude rather than complaint...sharing what we have with others...practicing forgiveness and seeking wonder. Serving as the hands, feet, voice, and heart of God, doing Its work in the world, all things are possible.

Knowing the Power of my Holy Word, I release this prayer to the One Power and Intelligence that I call God, with absolute faith in Its immediate. I call it done. And so we affirm this together by saying...and so it is. And so it shall ever be! Amen!

Musical Meditation – A Covenant & Counting on You, by Raffi

Diana – Moving Into Celebration

Please repeat after me as together we affirm... *There is Power in our Prayer...There is Power in our Vision...We are creating a more beautiful and peaceful world...right here and right now... And so it is! Amen!*

It's time for Celebration and Gratitude! I thought it would be fun to pick up on some of the childlike energy and wonder...

Good News Video – *Be Like a Child*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DswPg0KYOjQ>

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Each Sunday, we invite you to join in the celebration of the work we are doing in the world by sharing of your financial Good, should you choose to. If you are at home, 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 speak this blessing, letting the words flow from your heart. And please feel our deep appreciation for 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!


Please enjoy Raffi as he sings a tribute to peace activist, humanitarian, and former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.


Offertory Video – *Turn This World Around*, by Raffi


Gratitude Prayer – Chris & Rev. Diana

Invitations – Chris

 **Tuesdays, 3-5 pm – Michael Bordeaux’s** Book Club. The current book is *Church of the Wild: How Nature* by Victoria Loorz.

 **Thursdays, 3-5 pm – *Metaphysical Bible*** led by Prayer Practitioner Chris Johnson. No knowledge of the Bible is necessary. Drop-ins are welcome.

 ***What Are You Planting? A Mystic Morning Brew*** with Prayer Practitioner Lucinda Alton, **Saturday, February 6th** from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Please contact Lucinda or our website for more information, or to register.

 ***Shrink Your Carbon Footprint, Gently Used Treasures Sale!*** Got stuff? Contact Kris Fortier for how you can get involved with our April 30th Parking Lot Sale.

 *Keep Your Eyes on the weekly announcements... more new activities to come!*

If you'd like prayer support, we have prayer request cards and envelopes on the fireplace, as well. If you would like to meet with a Prayer Practitioner in person, I am available for a quick prayer after the service.

Or contact one of the Mystic Heart Practitioners for a full Session during the week. Our contact information is listed in the bulletin and on our website, as are all of the Mystic Heart events and activities.

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 & Gary Lynn Floyd

Close of Service