

Strong-Hearted Living...

*Sunday, February 13, 2022 Taizé and
50th Anniversary Celebration*



A Beloved Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

**Rev. Diana Johnson, with Sherri Dotter, RScP &
Chris Johnson, RScP**

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Opening Prayer – Sherri

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 home to your own Mystic Heart. It is so good to have you here with us this morning as we begin with a short Taizé that will lead into Ellie and Randy Thompson's Golden Recommitment Ceremony. Let's begin by joining our voices in sacred song...you'll find the words on the screen.

Chant - *Opening Up (in Sweet Surrender)*, from Rainbow Spirit Oregon

Rev. Diana

Singing is a powerful form of prayer. This month we are *Tending to the Heart*...and in this second week of February we'll be exploring the concept of *Strong-Hearted Living*. This seemed like an appropriate topic for today's 50-year Anniversary Celebration.

But first, let's ground ourselves into this moment, breathing in Peace...and breathing out Love...Peace within...Love surrounding you...moving into the stillness within...letting the breath slow just a bit, and settling the here and now... just being present...blessed with the gift of life...just breathing...

Join me in feeling our connection with all that is...with our Global Community...not only the human community, but with all of life...and with all that we would call non-living. The Light of Spirit burns brightly within each of us...every human, every animal, every plant...a perfect expression of God...every creature, shining with the Light of Spirit...the rocks, the sand, the soil, and the water, teeming with Life, radiating Intelligence...

And extending our Light to the heavens, to the clouds, to the stars and the galaxies, and sensing that all of it is radiating with the same Divine Light...there is no separation. There is only Unity...There is only Love...There is only Spirit.

Feeling the Truth of these words, we share a heartfelt intention for our time together. We *Attend to the Heart* and ask what it means to *Live From a Strong Heart*. We explore what it means to Love...to really Love...ourselves and one another. And we celebrate that Love as the recommitment of Ellie and Randy.

Acknowledging our connection with all of life, our collective Work here is empowered...Our collective prayer and meditation leave an imprint of Peace, of Love, of Grace, on the world, on the cosmos, for all time...through our Practice, transformation is occurring...Wholeness is being revealed.

Rev. Diana

February...the time of year that we take the time to contemplate Love. Last week we talked about Love as God's self-givingness, and that as we are said to be made in the image and likeness of our Creator, in the image and likeness of that Intelligence that gives rise to all of Life, each of us has the capacity to give of ourselves, to offer our gifts in the world. Each of us has the ability to Love. This is why we're here...this is our purpose on earth...to give of ourselves for the good of the Whole...to Love Whole-heartedly.

Author Angeles Arrien, in her book *The Four-Fold Way*, shares the wisdom she has gleaned from her interactions with native peoples. She says that "Many native cultures believe that the heart is the bridge between Father Sky and Mother Earth. For these traditions, the four-chambered heart, the source for sustaining emotional and spiritual health, is described as being full, open, clear, and strong."

50 years of marriage certainly requires living with and from a full, open, clear, and strong heart. Anything in life that we are truly committed to requires the same.

Last week, we talked about what it means to be full-hearted. Full-hearted living means we're all in...fully engaged...committed to the people and situations in our lives.

We mentioned that where we are open-hearted, we're embracing possibilities, and softening where we have become rigid or defensive.

Where we are clear-hearted, we're acting from the clarity that comes from deep, intuitive listening rather than confusion, doubt, or indifference.

And where we are strong-hearted, we're courageously able to be our authentic selves. This is where we're going to spend our time today.

Author Brené Brown has a lot to say about authenticity and whole-heartedness. She says that "Where others approach life half-heartedly, wholehearted people have the courage to bring their full selves to the table." What does it mean to bring your full self to the table? Take a moment to reflect on your own life...your relationships...the

places you frequent...the roles you fill. Is the *you* that shows up in your primary relationships the same *you* that hangs out with your friends, or shows up for work? In my life, this often looks like asking myself... “Is the *me* that wakes up next to my husband and cares for my home the same *me* that shows up as the Minister of Mystic Heart?”

Am I consistent in how my personality shows up? Not am I perfect...always kind, loving, and compassionate...because no one shows up that way all the time. It’s not a bad target to shoot for, but what I’m talking about is, am I consistent? Does what I am thinking and feeling on the inside match how I am speaking and acting on the outside? This is one form of consistency.

Also, would the people I work with see the same me that my family sees, that my close friends see? Or does my personality change, chameleon-like as I move from one setting to the next? Of course, different roles require different qualities or strengths to come forward, but in moving through my day, do I live from my values, or do I fudge here and there to please others?

Do I express my feelings and opinions respectfully, or do I hold them in to keep the peace? Do I dress in what feels comfortable, or do I try to keep up with the latest styles, or wear what others will approve of? Does my home reflect who I truly am, or have I surrounded myself with what will impress my friends and neighbors? Is there a sense of consonance between my internal and external life, or is there dissonance? Do I live with a sense of integrity...honesty with myself and others...and do I live that way consistently? These are important questions. Am I living my life authentically? Am I bringing all of myself to the table?

Saint Francis said, “It is no use walking somewhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching.”

The good news is that there’s no such thing as an “authentic person” and an “inauthentic person.” Because authenticity isn’t a fixed quality. It’s a skill you PRACTICE over time. That may also seem like the bad news...like everything else in life, it takes Practice.

“Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we actually are.” (Brené Brown)

Being yourself can feel difficult. It can mean becoming vulnerable, being willing to be seen for who you are. But it’s well worth it. When you practice authenticity, you give your silent permission for others to do the same.

In my research for today’s talk, I found an interesting quote from a young pastor of a Christian Church in Los Angeles. I think it is wise that we hear what he offers. He says that:

authenticity is more than honesty. Of all the things the millennial generation wants out of church (and out of the organizations they take part in), authenticity may be the most important...As a twenty-something pastor who lives in Silver Lake – a very creative, diverse, and subversive neighborhood in LA – I see the need for authenticity in the hearts of my neighbors, as well as in my own heart. It's the battle cry of our generation, often expressed publicly with ironic clothing and accessories, or more privately with heart-to-heart conversations over coffee and other things we love.

He goes on to say:

I think the cry for authenticity stems out of the reality that we're a generation let down by previous ones. Past ideals don't work for us. We're fed up with wearing masks and hiding the truth about ourselves in an effort to blend in because it starves our hearts and leaves us empty. We crave a place and people we can be our true selves with and be truly loved. We're crawling out from the bushes and searching for more. We're calling others out to do the same, too, and are creating new standards for relationships.¹

Rev. Diana

The book of Ephesians in the Christian Scriptures calls those who seek to live a Spiritual life "to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life...and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." In other words, dare to step out of who you think you are expected to be, and into the image and likeness that you were created to be.

I believe that each of us has been intentionally and perfectly created...with specific traits and qualities and unique gifts to share with the world. Our life's purpose is to develop and share those gifts. This is the way we leave our positive imprint on human evolution. This is the way we practice Love in the world. This is how we live Wholehearted, Fullhearted, Stronghearted lives.

Let's close together in prayer. Please hold these words as your Reality if they ring True for you...

We are in the presence of the One...one Life, one Source, one Love...and I call that One God. It is known as Spirit, as Intelligence, as Pure Possibility...as the Process of Life Unfolding. By whatever name we call it, I know that God is forever giving of Itself as Creation. And so, each and every being is an expression of Divinity...completely whole, nothing missing, nothing broken...every Quality of Spirit firmly planted within, just waiting to be remembered. In this Holy Moment, I call attention to the Peace, the Love, the Compassion that are forever available and waiting for expression. I bring my awareness to the Power and Courage that dwell

within me...to the Light that shines within me, to the Life that I Am. I acknowledge my Authenticity, and my inherent Freedom to graciously express my True Self.

I know that as one by one, each of us step into what is Right and True within us, we are doing our part to create a ***Love-Soaked World***. Together, we envision a world completely transformed by all of the Creative Love and Wholehearted Action we are expressing, individually and collectively... a world that is peaceful, joyful, abundant, and free...where all beings live as one family, caring for one another and our beautiful planet as the Sacred beings that we are...a world where everyone has plenty of nourishing food, a warm and comfortable home, medical care, education, creative contribution, and a sense of belonging...a world where every being is valued for its inherent Goodness and Light...where the Peace we cultivate within shows up in our world as Radical Love and Compassion. 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 our Source, and offer our heartfelt Vision, the world is changed...in this instant...and I give thanks. I am so grateful for all who are here today in community and in Celebration.

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

By this act of prayer, we become *Whole-hearted*...we begin to *Live from a Strong Heart*...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 Loving Power and Intelligence that I call God, with absolute faith in Its immediate action. I know it is done. And we affirm this together by saying...and so it is. Amen!

Let this Vision become Real in your heart and mind. Infuse it with your Faith. Feel it...know it...and live it. There is no lack or limitation in God...there is no reason that we cannot have such a world.

Musical Meditation – *What Kind of World*, by Daniel Nahmod

Rev. Diana – Moving Into Celebration

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. And prepare to Celebrate!

Please repeat after me as together we affirm:

There is Power in our Prayer...

There is Power in our Vision...

Living from the fullness of our hearts...

We are revealing heaven on earth...

Right here, right now...

(And together we say) *And so it is! Amen!*

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, let these words reverberate in your heart and mind, knowing the Power of our word; 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!

Don't hesitate to get up and move, as we celebrate Authenticity...

Offertory Music Video – *You Do You*, by Jason Mraz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiF48Gp1PVg>

Gratitude Prayer – Sherri & Rev. Diana

No Invitations this week. Check your bulletins or go to our website to find out what's coming up at Mystic Heart.

Rev. Diana – Renewal of Vows

What an appropriate topic to precede the Celebration of a 50-Year Marriage and a 55-Year Love Affair. What a privilege it is for each of us to witness such Strong-Hearted and Courageous Commitment, and to witness the Re-Commitment of Love through this Renewal of Vows.

Ellie and Randy, we take delight in sharing today's very special occasion with you. Lots of people believe that entering into marriage is the final step in a passionate relationship. The way they see it, a couple meets, gets to know each other, falls in love, decides they want to go through life together, and then take the final step—tying the knot. But the final step in a couple's relationship isn't marriage—that only marks the beginning of a grand adventure that will be long and fruitful for each couple.

You've shared the joys, blessings, and the challenges of married life for 50 years. And, this day, it's your wish to reaffirm your commitment to working together to make your marriage grow and blossom in the years to come. May this ceremony remind you that despite the stresses inevitable in every life, your love, respect, trust, and understanding of each other will continue to increase your contentment and heighten your joy in living.

One of the greatest blessings that has come from Ellie and Randy's marriage is this beautiful family. Violet and Miriam, the two Thompson granddaughters, have a few words to share. Violet, would you like to come up first?

Violet:

My grandparents were married on February 14th, 1972.

Grammy was 18 and Papa was 21.

Their marriage has had 600 months of hugs.

2,608 weeks of laughter, and a few tears.

18,262 days of kisses.

438,280 hours of patience and understanding.

They have had a home filled with love, and a family filled with memories.

It is, and continues to be, a blessed life.

Congratulations, Grammy and Papa!

Miriam:

With each anniversary, your love has become deeper.

Your trust has become stronger, because it has had time to grow.

Your struggles become strengths, because they have been worked out with care.

Togetherness becomes oneness, because you take the time to share.

When a marriage is nurtured, it continues to grow with each passing anniversary.

God's Guidance and blessings have given you 50 years of contentment and understanding, through hard times and easy times.

Congratulations to my grandparents!

Rev. Diana

From the book of I Corinthians in the Christian Bible, chapter 13, verses 4 – 8 offer some powerful words for this special occasion.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the Truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Ellie and Randy, would you please come to the front and turn to face your Beloved Community as we witness the renewal of your vows.

Ellie, do you reaffirm your love for Randy, agreeing to do everything in your power to sustain that Love, no matter what circumstances present themselves? (YES) Do you commit to support Randy's individual growth, even as the two of you continue to grow together throughout your remaining years? (YES) And is it your intention that your marriage to Randy will continue for the remainder of your days? (YES)

Randy, do you reaffirm your love for Ellie, agreeing to do everything in your power to sustain that Love, no matter what circumstances present themselves? (YES) Do you commit to support Ellie's individual growth, even as the two of you continue to grow together throughout your remaining years? (YES) And is it your intention that your marriage to Ellie will continue for the remainder of your days? (YES)

On your wedding day, you exchanged rings as a symbol of the never-ending circle of love. Rings serve as a reminder of your wedding vows to each other, and your commitment to living in unity, love, and happiness. At this time, it is appropriate to reconfirm the meaning of the rings you wear.

Please join your left hands together so that Randy's hand is on top. Randy, please repeat after me. Ellie, I wear this ring you placed on my hand – as a symbol of my love and commitment to you.

Ellie, please repeat after me. Randy, I wear this ring you placed on my hand – as a symbol of my love and commitment to you.

Ellie and Randy, you have chosen the Unity Candle Ceremony as a way of closing your ceremony. Please begin by lighting a taper candle to symbolize your individual spirit. (Pause) 50 years ago, you chose to marry. Today, each of you will take your individual candle, and together, light the Golden Unity Candle in honor of your 50 years together, and to symbolize your commitment to live out your days as man and wife.

May the light of love, the light of understanding, the light of respect, and the light of passion shine eternally in your marriage.

I ask that you each remember to continue to cherish each other as special and unique individuals and that you each respect the thoughts and ideas of the other. And most of all, be able to forgive each other, and not hold grudges against one another. Live each day in love with each other, always being there to give love, comfort, and refuge to each other, in good times and bad.

Slide Show – *When I Said I Do*, by Clint & Lisa Black

It is with pleasure and a great sense of honor that I conclude the renewal of your marriage. Please celebrate this renewal of vows with a kiss and a toast!

(Sony comes forward to offer the toast.)

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

¹ Stephen McAlpin