

# The Path of Devotion

January 14th , 2024



An Independent Interfaith Community  
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP

## Taizé

**Rev. Diana – we allow the sounding of the bell to carry us inward – 3 Bells**

**Chris – Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana –** Welcome...if you're new with us here this morning, my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystical Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. I welcome you home to our Spiritual Community and I welcome you home to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart. We begin our Taizé Meditation by joining our voices in song.

**Rev. Diana & Chris – Taizé Chants**

 **Welcome Home to Your Mystic Heart, written by Diana & Chris Johnson**

 **In My Awakening, written by Karl Anthony**

**Rev. Diana –** We take a moment now to feel and know our connection with all that is. We use the breath...breathing in and feeling the coolness at the tip of the nostrils...following the breath as it moves through the mind, down the throat, towards the chest and into the heart...then allowing it to move through the heart and back into the world...

Remembering that the breath connects us to our fellow humans, and to all other creatures...we share the same life-giving air...

The breath connects us to the plants...we inhale what they have given, and we exhale what they need to create oxygen and food in return...and the cycle continues. Breath is Life.

There are no barriers...there is nothing to separate us from Life. Each of us is a Life in process...every creature, plant, rock, and grain of sand...every drop of water...all that exists, no matter how large or small is an intricate and irreplaceable part of the One Life, all dancing together in this cosmic mystery. Take a moment to breathe in that sense of connection...breathing in, I receive the Life that connects all beings, all things, all of Creation. Breathing out, I give back to Life.

As human expressions, we are given self-reflective consciousness, the ability to make choices, and so our responsibility is to make them wisely...to care for our brothers and sisters, human and otherwise...to care for the Sacred Mother as she gives of her

nourishment...to make an honorable and noble contribution to Life Itself, doing no harm, and aiding in the transformation happening in our world. We are experiencing a **Silent Awakening**, and by our conscious participation, we are moving *with* the Flow of Life.

We are on a **Path of Devotion**, whether we know it or not. We are beings created in Love, by Love, for Love. What is **The Path of Devotion**? It is the path of Love. Bhakti Yoga is the name offered in the Hindu tradition. Bhakti Yoga is a path focused on loving devotion towards the Divine. And similar to Hinduism, Buddhism holds Devotion (or Puja), a commitment to religious observances, as a central Practice. Rather than calling it a Path of Love, a Buddhist might refer to it as a Path of Compassion or Lovingkindness.

In the Pagan and other Nature-based traditions, the Way of Devotion points toward the cultivation of a personal relationship to “ultimate reality”...to the whole-hearted adoration and devotional surrender to its transforming Grace...trust in its providential care, its sustaining energy, and sense of affirming Presence.

And Christianity might define **The Path of Devotion** as a process of loving submission to God...the intentional surrender to, and worship of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit...and to the Grace that fills our lives when we commit ourselves to such a path.

In each of these traditions, **The Path of Devotion** is one of Love...Reverence...Surrender...Commitment. It is a path of going inward to find what is required to become the best we can be, in service to something larger than ourselves. It recognizes that we are here to Love and to Serve.

**The Path of Devotion** calls us to rediscover the miraculous nature of all that surrounds us...to reawaken the curiosity, wonder, and awe that lives within us. Our first step, as we enter this path, is to turn inward...to find the Life, of Spirit, in your own being. Bring your attention to your heart...to your heartbeat. (Pause) Allow every breath you take to be drawn all the way down into the heart...to nourish and soften the heart. No need to defend or protect (Pause) Every breath, a Loving Gift of Spirit...quieting your restlessness...bringing reconciliation...Peace...Connection.

Breathing in, I receive the Life that connects all beings, all things, all of creation. Breathing out, I give back to Life. (Pause) Breathing in, I receive the Love that connects all things. Breathing out, I send my Love into the world. (Pause)

Each time you take time to hear and know the beating of your heart...to follow and attend to your breath...you are making an investment...and it grows and deepens with the time. Every conscious breath, received as a gift of Spirit, connects you to your Divinity...it nurses you back to Wholeness...it carries you Home. (Pause)

Let your heart breathe safety and well-being into your bloodstream...let it become soft, compassionate, Loving. This is where we begin **The Path of Devotion**...by building a bridge to a deeper, more conscious relationship with our bodies...with ourselves...with the Creator...and with Life. Until we can be with our own lives in a Loving and Peaceful way, we cannot easily access our Love, Compassion, and Caring

for others or the world. Until we can accept ourselves, with all of our perceived flaws, as expressions of the Divine, we will not see the Divinity in others.

***The Path of Devotion*** calls me to acknowledge the Divinity in all that exists, and to bring my attention back, with reverence and awe, moment by moment to the Spirit moving through everything.

### **Chris – Guided Meditation**

*The Path of Devotion* is our natural disposition... Young children instinctively devote their full attention, energy, and love to whatever they are doing... completely surrendered to the moment... they see the world around them with unbridled wonder and awe... they give themselves fully to Life, holding nothing back...

This is the meaning of *Worship*... to behold all of Creation with awesome wonder... not as a spectator, but as an active participant... regarding all that we see, feel, and experience as Holy... as a Sacred Expression of the Life Divine... We worship Spirit by seeing the divinity of everyone and everything...

In our three minutes of shared, Silent Meditation this morning, let us remember the awe and reverence with which we beheld the world as children... the unconditional Love and Wonder that poured forth from us, spontaneously... Let us worship Creation with the same wholehearted abandon... fully surrendered into the Great Mystery...

### **Silence – 3:00**

With profound gratitude for this time of shared contemplation, communion, and worship, we return our attention now to this time and to this place... maintaining our childlike awe and wonder... affirming our oneness with all of Creation... and participating completely in this One Divine Life...

As Taizé continues, we open our hearts, minds, and spirits to Rev. Diana's inspiring message... We allow the Divine wisdom and intuition of our own Mystic Heart to remind us of who and Whose we are... and to guide us each on our own, unique, individualized *Path of Devotion*...

**Rev. Diana** – Affirm with me now...I follow ***The Path of Devotion***. As often as I can remember, I stop...breathe... feel my heart soften...and refocus my attention on Spirit. I immerse myself in the serenity of prayer, even if only for a moment. As I do, I feel my belonging once again. I put Creator first in my life and find my Home in the Heart of God.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, God says to the prophet Isaiah: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." What does it mean to redeem? To see or recognize the value in something or someone...to acknowledge one's inherent value. This beautiful passage is here to remind us that each of us is valuable...each of us is a perfect and intentional expression of Divinity...a beautiful and loving part of creation. Creator sees and knows our value. Who are we to question?

In the week ahead, allow yourself to be reminded of Who and Whose you are. Take moments to breathe...to soften the heart...to receive the Love that connects us and send that Love on...Love is a great teacher. Remember that the Love of Spirit is Creator's Self-Givingness, and that as an expression of the Divine, you too have a giving nature. Take as many opportunities as you can this week to give of yourself...bless the world with your time, your attention, your talents, or skills...offer a smile, an open door, an extra set of hands...offer your listening ear, your Loving Heart.

Take a moment, morning and evening, to offer blessings...to yourself, to others, to the world...to offer gratitude for your healthy body, your sound mind, your loving spirit...for the many blessings that surround and fill your life. Upon waking, acknowledge that "This is the day the Lord has made"...rejoice and be glad in it. (from Psalm 118:24) Take time to remember that the beauty of the day is not that *it* is new, but that *you* are being made new. The glory of the day is not that *it* marks a change, but that *you* are being changed.

***The Path of Devotion*** is mindful path...it begins by becoming acquainted with your own Divinity...acknowledging the Divine in others and in the world...and ***The Path of Devotion*** is an active path...a path of actively engaging with the world...in Sacred Service...in Love.

**In the name of all that is Holy, we close together in prayer.**

Holy Presence...Loving Creator...you are all that is, has ever been and ever will be.

I trust and give thanks for my own Perfection and Wholeness as your intentional creation.

By my very breath, I feel and know my Connection with All That Is...

With the beating of my heart, I sense the Love with which I Am created.

As I look to the Beauty and Perfection of Nature, her cycles remind me of the Eternal Nature of Life, the Eternal Nature of Spirit...

I trust in the Love that is inherently mine when I consciously and actively engage with Life...

I have much to offer the world...You made me to be Your hands, feet, heart, and voice. You made me to Love and to Serve...And so, I do.

I offer myself...I offer my Life...I walk ***The Path of Devotion***.

I give thanks for the Beauty and Blessings that shower my Life...and for the challenges that build my character, resilience, and faith...

God's Grace takes many forms, and I receive it all with reverence, awe, and a deep sense of gratitude.

By my conscious attention and choice, I place Faith in the Goodness of Life at the center of my life...I make Joy my *state* of being....and Love my *way* of being.

I thank You, Spirit, for Your Power and Presence in my Life...in my heart.

I thank you for the Grace that fills every moment...

Giving thanks for this time of Communion and the depth of my Connection, I rest, knowing that this prayer guides my thoughts, words, and actions as I move into the coming week. All that unfolds from this moment on is *answered prayer* and I give thanks for it...And So It Is! Amen!

**Rev. Diana** – I invite you to Come back into the awareness of your body...notice the atmosphere in the room, and when you feel ready, gently opening your eyes and allowing your gaze to take in whatever is before you. Feel free to look around and say good morning to everyone who is here celebrating with you this morning. This is your Spiritual Family...one of your support systems. These are some of the people who care about you and are there for.

### **Rev. Diana – Love Offering**

As we close our Taizé Meditation, we offer the opportunity for you to share your financial good in support of the work we do in the world. If you're joining us online, you can find a Donate Button and our mailing address at [mysticheart.org](http://mysticheart.org). And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

**Offertory Video– *Let Our Name Be Amen***, by Omkara & Gotama

<https://youtu.be/DUEXxVkvxX4?list=RDDUEXxVkvxX4>

### **Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering**

Please consider grabbing a cup of something warm next door and come back to join in the Conscious Conversation. We'll close the Taizé portion of our morning with **A Soul's Blessing**.

### **Rev. Diana & Chris – Taizé Closing Song**

 ***A Soul's Blessing, written by Chris Johnson***

## *Conscious Conversation*

### **Chris – Opening Prayer**

**Rev. Diana** – Good morning and welcome, or welcome back...welcome to those joining online. If you're new with us here this morning... my name is Rev. Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor and Spiritual Director of Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. Welcome home to our Gathering Place, to our Spiritual Family, and to the answers that lie within your own Mystic Heart. I invite you to get on your feet and join the music.

### **Rev. Diana & Chris – Opening Music**

 ***Welcome to the Mystic Heart, written by Diana & Chris Johnson***

 ***One Big Family, written by Robin Hackett & Gary Lynn Floyd***

 ***The Silent Awakening, written by Tina Malia***

**Rev. Diana** – As we begin a new year together, I invite you to renew your commitment to the creation of a ***Love-Soaked World***. Engaging the body, allowing Spirit's Presence to be felt, let's breathe in Peace...allowing it to move down into the heart...and release it as Love...as Self-Givingness.

Know with me now that we are creating a world where all humans embody and live from the Qualities of Spirit...Love, Kindness, Generosity, and Compassion...from this way of being, there is a deep sense of Joy, Contentment, Sufficiency. All people honor and care for one another, for all of the life forms that share this beautiful earth, and for the earth Herself.

We realize that we are connected to all of Life...that we are dependent on the planet to sustain us, and on one another. Being generous by our nature, and living a life true to our nature, we give of ourselves freely, offering the gifts we came here to give. With all needs met for every person, each one is free to share time and talent in ways that feed the soul.

Life on earth is a story...a story that we are helping to write by our every thought, word, and action. Together, we envision a story where all beings are well-fed, and have the safety and comfort of home...where health, education, and healthy relationships are supported by social systems grounded in Wellness and Wholeness...where all find Purpose.

We welcome this new way of living, valuing every being for its uniqueness...we practice living Authentic lives...Integrity comes naturally as there is no need to protect. With Love, Generosity and Kindness guiding every human heart, our world is free of hatred and violence. We recognize the abundance that surrounds us, and gratefully receive all that is needed to live physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fulfilling lives.

All beings experience thriving like never before as we learn to see the sacred in everyone and everything...we walk in reverence and gratitude for all that we have been given.

We maintain this Vision day by day, moment by moment; we are not swayed by appearances. Each of us works to align our actions with our Vision, living these changes first in our own lives, with our families, friends, and neighbors...and a new world is being born. In this process of profound change, this Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, Family.

By the power of our deep faith, this prayer is acted upon, answered even before it is spoken, as Spirit knows our heart's desire and intent. In full expectation of its Graceful unfolding...we release it to the Creative Power and Intelligence that I call God...to the One that gets it done...And so it is...Amen! Sathu...Selah...Ashay...Aho!



Bringing awareness back to the body, to the room, to the amazing beings who share this space with us this morning...look around to say good morning to your Spiritual Family if you haven't already.

I've heard so many people say that this year is going to be a good one...that things are shifting and changing in their lives. There seems to be an optimism in the air. **Is anyone here feeling that way? Are there changes happening in your life? Care to share?**

Sometimes it just feels good to be witnessed, to have a place to share what's going on in our lives. This is one of the blessings of Spiritual Community.

Our theme this month is ***Silent Awakening***, and the topic of Conversation this morning is ***The Path of Devotion***.

**How do you define Devotion?**

During the Taizé, we gave Devotion a particular definition. **Does anyone remember how we defined it?**

(a path of Love, of self-givingness, of dedication, of full engagement, of calling attention to the sacred)

I would like to suggest that ***The Path of Devotion*** is also a path of authenticity.

**What is authenticity?**

(the root is shared with author, and means genuine, original; acknowledging all of who we are created to be as an individualized expression of Spirit and living from that...being fully ourselves)

**Why might I suggest that *The Path of Devotion* is a *Path of Authenticity*?** (In order to live a life of devotion, I have to look for the Sacred in everything...I have to see God's fingerprints everywhere I look. I won't be able to recognize the Divine in others and in the world if I can't find it in myself)

I'd like to share a 2-minute video that speaks to Devotion and Authenticity. Then we can have more conversation. This is called ***The Pencil's Tale***.

<https://youtu.be/HisYsqqszq0>

**How does this tie in with our Conversation this morning?**

**How do you interpret "Put yourself in someone else's hands"?**

**Where does "Embrace challenges for growth" fit in?**

**How are you doing with "Learn from mistakes"? Do you learn, shift, and move on, or do you tend to beat yourself up?**

**What are the inner qualities that you value in yourself?**

We are all leaving our mark on the world...we can't help it. I invite you to take this question with you this week... **What kind of mark will you leave on the world?** Maybe

spend some time contemplating *The Path of Devotion* and *the Path of Authenticity*...who are you here to be? What are you devoted to?

**Is there anything else that has come up this morning that you want to share?**

You know that everything you need in life is already given, already within you. The Christian Gospels tell us that “the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. (1 John 2:27) You are already complete...nothing is wrong in you, nothing is missing. You are a perfect and intentional expression of the Divine. And the mark you leave on the world is uniquely yours.

This has been another great and Conscious Conversation. We can continue it over lunch if we wish, but for now, let's close in prayer.

**Rev. Diana – Closing Prayer**

**Love Offering**

I 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](http://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 budget and plan for our growth.

**Offertory Video – *Who I'm Meant to Be*, by Anthem Lights**

**Chris – Blessing for the Offering**


**Chris – Invitations**

 ***Michael's Book Club meets on Tuesdays – book is *The Delight in Being Ordinary* by Roland Merullo.***

 ***Prayer Practitioner Lucinda Alton will be offering a new class, *Neuro Dharma* (book by Rick Hanson) beginning this Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> from 2 – 5 pm.***

 ***Fast Track to Wellness meets on Thursdays from 12:00 – 2:00 pm.***

 ***Metaphysical Bible meets on Thursdays from 3-5 pm with Chris Johnson.***

 ***Common Threads of Truth - A presentation will be given this Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup> by Mary Davis to discuss the Mormon tradition and the Common Threads of Truth it shares with other faith paths.***

**Looking Ahead...**

 ***And you won't want to miss Ellie's Birthday Bash Dance Party on Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>. We have many birthdays happening the last 10 days of this month...come help us celebrate in Community.***



 ***And great news...we have reserved a new spot for our Spring Retreat. More information will be going out via email this week.***

**There is more information available in the new month's Bulletin...take one home with you. And check out our amazing website, compliments of Chris Johnson.**

**Prayer Requests: I am available after service – We invite everyone to help us make a private space for prayer here in the Sanctuary by joining us next door for lunch.**

**Information Cards if new people**

**Rev. Diana & Chris – Closing Song**

 ***Love Be With You, written by Lainey Bernstein, RScP & Gary Lynn Floyd***



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