

Loving, Feeling Loved

Sunday, February 18, 2024



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Rev. Diana Johnson, with Chris Johnson, RScP,
and musician Dalton Fitzgerald

Taizé


Rev. Diana-we follow the bell to the stillness within...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 with musical prayer.

Dalton – Taizé Chants

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

 **We Are One**, written by Linda Webb-Khakaba

Rev. Diana – This month we are using the Practice of Grounding to sense our connection with all that is. I invite us to close your eyes or rest your gaze downward and relax, allowing the chair to take all of your weight, feet resting on the floor...notice how you feel today...how your body feels...what's happening in your mind...notice how your breath is flowing...and whatever the breath feels like, begin to slow it down...let it go silent...feel the belly rise, then pause at the top...and let a slow breath out. Again, inhale...pause...and release. Let your whole body relax. Let a wave of calm flow over and through you.

Take a moment now to feel where your body touches the chair...become aware of the sturdiness of the earth beneath you, and how it supports every aspect of you. From this grounded awareness, imagine roots, like the roots of a tree, flowing from you deep down into the ground beneath you...rooting down through the floor, into the earth beneath you, and spreading out far and wide. Allow these roots to connect all the way down into the center of the planet...feeling the energy that lives there, and drawing that energy up through the soles of your feet, travelling up through your legs and thighs, up into your heart space, continuing up the spine and out through the head...

...and now moving it back down, from the atmosphere above you, down through the head, the body, all the way back into the earth...allowing it to ground you...to connect you with the Sacred Mother.

This deep rooting connects you with the earth, and with everything that lives on Her, within Her, and beyond Her...with all humans, and all other creatures...with the plants...the rocks and grains of sand...and with every drop of water...with the heavenly bodies. 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...

As human expressions, we are given the powers of self-reflection and choice. In return for these precious gifts, we use them wisely, caring for our brothers and sisters, human and otherwise...caring for the Sacred Mother as she gives of her nourishment...doing no harm, and aiding in the transformation happening in our world.

We move into the contemplation of **The Sacred Feminine**...and on what it means to truly **Love and Feel Loved**. We are each a unique combination of masculine and feminine qualities and traits. These are not specific to gender, but energies that co-exist within each of us. **The Sacred Feminine** is expressed when we are receptive, present, empathetic...listening and hearing in a way that is supportive and nurturing...from a place of poise, or peaceful strength. Both the **Sacred Feminine** and the **Sacred Masculine** have unique parts to play in **Loving** and **Feeling Loved**.

What is Love? Some might define it as an emotion, as a sentimental feeling that is directed toward another person or thing. Others might define it as the strongest kind of preference...a powerful attraction...or a feeling of deep connection with and support of another. I would like to suggest that Love is so much more than these...that it is the Self-Givingness of the Creator...the very act of Spirit's becoming all that is...the very act that gave, and continues to give life, to each one of us, and to all that exists.

If Love in the Absolute is the Essence, Substance, and Process of Creation Itself, and if I Am made in the image and likeness of *that*, then human Love is simply an extension of God's Love by means of me and you. There is nothing sentimental about Love from this perspective. Love is a verb...an action...and an action that we have to *choose*, just as the volitional aspect of God chooses to experience Life as each one of us, and as every other form of existence.

Father Richard speaks of the tradition of the heart...the mystical tradition that uses the heart of Christ as a point of devotion. He suggests that the correspondence between us as humans, and God as All That Is, is Love..."Love not merely as sentiment or feeling, but Love as the generative Power that overcomes death...Love as self-donation, (self-givingness)...Love as welcome of the *other*, whomever that *other* may be...Love as the gravitational force that binds all things together...Love as the fire that burns clean and as the balm that heals...Love as the vision that sees the integrity of both part and Whole...Love as Source and end and the path between."

Love is a wellspring from which we all may drink. We may approach that wellspring from different paths...from our own life's experiences...but Love Itself is available to all of us...it is part of the fabric of our being...it is our Nature. "Love is a sweet labor, a fierce

and bloody and imperfect life-giving choice that we make.” (Valerie Kaur) And if love is a labor, then love can be taught...it can be learned...and it can be practiced.

It has been said that “(We) will be judged according to our ability to Love.” (Fr. Carlo Carretto) We are not speaking of some kind of judgement by a force outside of ourselves. Rather, of a responsive Universe that returns to us what we give...we are speaking of reaping and sowing. As we choose Love as our way of being, and make it our Practice to cultivate Love in ourselves, in our relationships, and in our interactions in the world, ...so we are met with Love in return. The Rabbi Jesus taught that “as you give, it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over...”

What if we were not raised by loving parents, in a loving family or household? What if, despite our Loving Nature as humans, we find it difficult to see through the eyes of Love? Where do we begin our Practice? Some might suggest that we begin with learning to love ourselves...that all Love begins with self-Love and acceptance. This is one way to approach the cultivation of Love in our lives and may prove valuable. On the other hand, it can lead us to become lost in self-absorption.

St. Bonaventure, in the 13th Century, had another suggestion that we might find useful: “to work up to loving God, start by loving the very humblest and simplest things, and then move up from there...don’t start by trying to love God (that is too abstract), or even people (that can prove to be difficult as a first step). Love elements and rocks first, move to trees, then animals, and then humans. Now God is only a short leap away.” I might take this one step further...to see the elements and rocks, trees, and animals as God in form...to practice seeing every person, in all of their diversity and imperfection, as an intentional and irreplaceable expression of God...and to look in the mirror and offer yourself the same Grace.

Chris – Guided Meditation

The Apostle John wrote that “God is Love...” that our human expressions of Love – though imperfect – are still Divine Love flowing through us... Spirit within us yearning to affirm our essential Unity with another... to dissolve the apparent boundaries between us... to merge our souls in the Heart of God...

In extraordinary moments – holding our newborn baby or grandchild... gazing at our Beloved on our wedding day – the Sacred Feminine opens the deep well of our heart, and Divine Love floods our entire Being... we experience a Mystical Oneness with Spirit, with our Beloved, and with all of Creation...

In our three minutes of Shared, Sacred Silence this morning, let us allow our hearts to open to their very depths... and allow the Unconditioned Love of God to well up within us like a spring of Living Water... filling us to overflowing, so that we can’t help but share it with others... Give yourSelf completely to Love...

Silence – 3:00

As we bring our awareness back to this time and place, we give thanks for our Deep, Loving Communion with Spirit... for the love and support of Spiritual Family... and for the Sacred Feminine within that expands our receptivity to Divine Love...

As Taizé continues, we embrace Rev. Diana's inspirational message with wide-open hearts... with the courage to be vulnerable... with the Faith that Divine Love dispels all our fears... and with reassurance that we have been endowed with the gifts of *Loving and Feeling Loved*...

Rev. Diana – *Loving, Feeling Loved*...this has little to do with anyone outside of you. It is about redefining Love as God's Infinitely Giving Nature and accepting it as your Nature. It is about accepting that there is a Power and a Presence forever giving of Itself to you, through you, as you. You are most dearly Loved. The most natural thing in the world is for you to serve as a conduit for that Love...to allow it to move through you and out into the world.

If it isn't feeling natural for you right, have faith...lean into my faith...know that anything that is part of your very Nature can be uncovered...all Truth can be revealed...is being revealed. With time, attention, self-compassion, and Grace, the Love that you are *is* coming to Light in the world. It is the way of evolution...it is the action of Spirit and shall not be stopped...maybe slowed by our choices, but never stopped.

Let's anchor this knowing in prayer:

There is one, and only One Life, forever expressing as all of creation.

I take a moment to let that sink in...I Am, you Are, an individualized expression of that One Life.

We are not separate from the One that creates all...and we are not separate from one another.

This sense that we are somehow separate is what the Hindus and Buddhists call Illusion...not that the world and everything in it isn't real in the physical sense, just that everything we perceive as separate is dependent on, even entangled with, everything else...

Forever entwined, part of the fabric of eternity.

Accepting this as Truth, I am humbled by my smallness and my greatness.

The Love that I express in the world will not, by itself, heal the world.

But until I live *my* life in, from, and as Love, the world can never be Whole.

I dedicate myself and my life to Love...to self-givingness...to empathy and compassion...to seeing outside of myself and giving what is called for in every moment.

And I trust and know that as I give, so do I receive.

I open myself to the gifts of Spirit, in full faith that every need is known and met.

Thank You, Spirit, for Blessings too numerous to name...those gifts that I would call beautiful and graceful, and those that challenge me to grow in character, resilience, and faith.

I walk in reverence, awe, and deep gratitude for Your Powerful Presence and Wisdom in my Life. Thankful for this time of Communion, I rest, knowing that my prayer is answered before it is spoken. 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. And we thank you in advance for your gifts.

Dalton – Offertory Music

 **Listen, Listen**, written by Charley Thweatt

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Rev. Diana will be offering a class on *Understanding World Religions*, beginning Wednesday February 28th from 10 am – 1 pm.

We have space for our Spring Retreat at The Gathering Place at Shasta Lake. We are collecting your \$100 non-refundable deposit to hold your space. 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**.

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 Diana Johnson, and I am the Pastor here at Mystic Heart. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. We come together each week to be reminded of the Wisdom and Guidance that live in our own Mystic Hearts. You are

hereby invited and welcomed to this Spiritual Family, to our Spiritual Home, should you choose it for yourself.

Dalton – Opening Music

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

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

 **One God** by Linda Webb-Khakaba

Rev. Diana – You can stay standing if you wish, or whatever brings the Presence of Spirit into the Body as we join in the creation of a **Love-Soaked World**.

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...and from this way of being, I can feel the presence of a deep sense of Joy, Contentment, and Sufficiency. Can you feel it?

In this new world, 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 remember 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.

By our every thought, word, and action, we are writing a new story in which all beings are well-fed...have the safety and comfort of home and a deep sense of belonging and purpose. We are so grateful that once and for all, health, education, and healthy relationships are supported by social systems grounded in Integrity, Compassion and Wholeness.

We welcome this new way of living, valuing every being for its uniqueness...we practice living Authentic lives...there is no need to defend or 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...giving and receiving flow freely in every direction and all beings gratefully receive all that is needed to live physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fulfilling lives.

The planet and its beings thrive 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 this beautiful life, and to the amazing beings who share this space with us this morning...look around to say good morning to your Spiritual Family.

Our theme this month is **Sacred Feminine**, and the topic of Conversation this morning is **Loving, Feeling Loved**. If you were here for Taizé this morning, you will remember what was said...that every one of us is a unique combination of masculine and feminine qualities and traits...that **The Sacred Feminine** is expressed when we are feeling receptive, creative, nurturing...and when we are poised, a blending of peace and power.

And then we spent time in contemplation of these ideas: Both the **Sacred Feminine** and the **Sacred Masculine** have unique parts to play in **Loving** and **Feeling Loved**. We defined Love as the Self-Givingness of the Creator...the very act of Spirit's becoming all that is...the very act that gave, and continues to give life, to each one of us, and to all that exists...and that we are made in the image and likeness of *that*. We considered Love as a verb...an action...and an action that we have to *choose*...as a generative Power that overcomes death...Love as welcome of the *other*...Love as the gravitational force that binds all things together...Love as the fire that burns clean and as the balm that heals...Love as the vision that sees the integrity of both part and Whole...Love as Source and end and the path between. And I suggested that Love is available to all of us...it is part of the fabric of our being...it is our Nature. And it can be taught...it can be learned...and it can be practiced.

There was a lot more packed in this morning, but that's where I'd like to begin our Conversation this morning.

What is it that makes you feel Loved? (when someone helps me with something, or offers to, without needing to be asked; when someone hears what I am saying or needing clearly; when someone takes the time to write a note or plan an outing as a surprise)

How do you let others know that they are loved? (I do things for them; I listen for what they want/need; I say I Love – I tend to give Love in the ways I best receive it)

I've read that each of us has a couple of Love Languages, one that is predominant, and at least one that is clearly secondary. Are you familiar with the idea of Love Languages?

Is anyone familiar with the five Love Languages proposed by author Gary Chapman? (Words of Affirmation – encourage, appreciate, affirm, empathize, or listen actively; Quality Time – uninterrupted conversation, focused attention, creating space; Physical Touch – hugs, kisses, hand holding, gentle touch; Receiving Gifts – being

thoughtful, acts of kindness, making someone a priority, speaking purposefully; and Acts of Service – going out of your way to help another, showing follow-through on offered tasks, doing something to lighten another’s load)

Which Love Language do you suppose is your primary?

How about your secondary?

Do you tend to offer Love the way that you best receive it?

So, shouldn’t we be able to determine how another will feel loved if we pay attention?

Love Languages as we are talking about them falls into the realm of psychology, which is part of who we are...body, mind, spirit...no separation. I’d like to take this topic a little deeper. Do you suppose that we might have a Spiritual Love Language?

What might some of our Spiritual Love Languages be? How do we know?

Blogger Sarah Vincent suggests that, “To begin to understand your spiritual love language(s), it is helpful first to ask yourself some questions about your spiritual life. Not all the answers will be binary—many of these answers can exist on a spectrum, and it’s even O.K. for your answers to change depending on your mood! Not every question has to resonate with your experiences, but you may find them helpful to think about while working to get a deeper understanding of your spiritual habits and preferences. (And these questions are meant more for your contemplation than answering out loud, unless there is something you need to share.

When you pray, do you prefer to do so in silence or with some background noise? In solitude or as part of a crowd? In nature or indoors?

Does your spirituality feel rooted in rationality or emotion? Do you find yourself praying more in words or in feelings?

Do you prefer to pray or practice your faith in stillness or in action?

Do you find yourself more frequently bringing your desolations or your exaltations to prayer? (Your wins or losses)

Is there a saint to whom you have a particular devotion? (I would add spirits or spirit guides) Do you feel strongly connected to thanksgiving for creation?”

She suggests at least seven ways of expressing Love for God and feeling loved by God, the Mystery, Great Spirit.

Going to church or other spiritual gathering; individual or silent prayer; meditation in nature; music and art; charity work and volunteering; reading scripture; and learning and teaching.

Can you think of others?

There are infinite ways to feel God, so don't feel limited to these seven languages. Every person on earth will have a different experience of their spirituality and a unique relationship with God, or the gods.

Do you think that Great Spirit has a Love Language? At the risk of anthropomorphizing God, how do we know we are Loved by Spirit?

(They created us, gave of themselves to express as us; they give of themselves in meeting our needs, as a parent might; they have instilled in us specific qualities and a divine purpose; they offer or express as spiritual Principles for our use; they prompt us from within, and if necessary from without, to grow into our best selves)

In the New Testament, John confirms the importance of expressing love through actions and not just words. He says, "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." May our every thought, word, and action show the Love that we are.

Let's anchor this knowing in prayer:

There is one, and only One Life, forever expressing as all of creation.

I take a moment to let that sink in...I Am, you Are, an individualized expression of that One Life.

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I open myself to the gifts of Spirit, in full faith that every need is known and met.

Thank You, Spirit, for Blessings too numerous to name...those gifts that I would call beautiful and graceful, and those that challenge me to grow in character, resilience, and faith.

I walk in reverence, awe, and deep gratitude for Your Powerful Presence and Wisdom in my Life. Thankful for this time of Communion, I rest, knowing that my prayer is answered before it is spoken. And So It Is! Amen!

Take a moment to allow your awareness to return to your body, to this space, to this beautiful gathering...welcome back.

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** 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.

Tying in with our theme, please enjoy...


Dalton – Offertory Music

 **One Love**, written by Bob Marley


Chris – Blessing for the Offering


Rev. Diana - Brief Invitations

 **The Mystic Heart Book Club meets on Tuesdays** – book is *The Delight in Being Ordinary* by Roland Merullo.

 Fast Track to Wellness and Metaphysical Bible are taking one week off while Chris and I are on vacation.

Looking Ahead...

 **Rev. Diana will be offering a new course of study based on the book *Understanding World Religions***, beginning Wednesday February 28th from 10 am – 1 pm. More information can be found in your new bulletins...be sure to take one with you.

 And reservations are coming in for our Spring Retreat at The Gathering Place at Shasta Lake. We are collecting your \$100 non-refundable deposit to hold your space. We have 15-20 spots left, depending on sleeping arrangements. The reservations are first come, first served. The total cost per adult is \$275. We are open to making it a family retreat that includes children, depending on age. Contact Rev. Diana with your questions and to reserve your spot.

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

Information Cards if new people

Prayer Requests: Chris is 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

Dalton – Closing Song

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



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