

Touching the Living Buddha

Sunday, July 21, 2024

Rev. Diana Johnson, IM, RScM, with Chris Netto, RScP,
and Chris Johnson, RScP



An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Taizé

Rev. Diana – We follow the sound of the bell inward...


3 Bells

Chris N – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana – Good morning. 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. We open our doors in welcome, trusting that you will be led to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart. We begin our Taizé with Musical Prayer.

Rev. Diana & Chris J – Taizé Chants

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

 **Dropping Down**, written by Karen Drucker, Amy Bishop, & Gary Lynn Floyd

Rev. Diana – Settling into this one, perfect moment, we take a moment to breathe...to bring awareness to the breath...following it in and feeling the life flowing into our being...and following it out, letting go of any tension...with every breath in, feeling the body come to life, and with every breath out, letting everything go. In this sacred moment, there is only the breath...there is only Life unfolding...there is only Now..

As we settle into the present moment, we give thanks for our deep Connection with all of life, and for our awareness that we are connected to all that is. This is what is meant by *Global Community*...not only our human family that is spread across the earth, but also the more-than-human creatures...the plant beings and rock beings...the sand that covers the beaches, and the waves that rise and fall on the shores...all that is seen and that which is not...that which is known and that which will never be known...all connected at the deepest level...all teeming with the life of God, shining with the Light of Spirit. **9:43** Take a moment to sense the Light shining in and radiating from everything that exists...notice how there is no border between us, one Light melding into the next...we are One Light, expressing as Infinite Diversity.

As we take the time to feel and know our Oneness, we grow in compassion, empathy, understanding, and Love. We come to understand that every thought, word, and action matters and we become more mindful with each passing day.

This month, our contemplations are centered in *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, and this morning we reflect on what it means to *Touch the Living Buddha*.

In the Buddhist Tradition, the Living Buddha is the Buddha Nature that dwells within each one of us, within every being, within all that is. In progressive Christianity, we might call it the Living Christ. Mysticism might refer to it as Christ Consciousness, or the Divine Spark. Whatever we might call it, we long to touch it...to experience and express our own Holiness, our own Sacred Nature.

A Buddhist practitioner begins the journey through meditation. Becoming grounded in the Practice, she then sets out on the devotional path of Taking Refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Let's spend some time reflecting on the what it means to Take Refuge in these Three Jewels...taking refuge is the act of returning to a place of sanctuary or shelter to find safety, peace, and protection. In this context, the Buddha is the personification of an awakened being, a person who knows unshakeable inner freedom, peace, and compassion. It represents not only the historical Siddhartha, but also all the great teachers who have embodied deep wisdom and compassion and had a positive influence on the world around them. The Buddha is a symbol that represents the end of suffering in all of its forms, and the infinite possibility and potential for awakening that lives in each of us.

The dharma is the path that leads to the realization of our Buddha Nature, or Divine Nature. It teaches us about change or impermanence... reveals our connectedness...dissolves our fear and agitation...increases our understanding of what is true. The dharma is our heart's commitment to all that is healing, and liberating. And it is not a commitment we make just once. Rather, we make it countless times in a single day. When we are generous with our time, attention, and love, we embody the dharma. When we resolve to be truthful, to treasure a clear mind, and to engage the world with respect and appreciation, we live the dharma.

The sangha, or the community of the wise, can be understood on at least three levels. The community of those who are awakened and embody wisdom are referred to as the noble sangha. They inspire and encourage us...touch us with their unwavering commitment to make the world a better place. The sangha is also the monastic order of monks and nuns, people who demonstrate simplicity and integrity of their lives. Finally, the communities and relationships of trust and integrity we nurture in our own lives is also the sangha. Genuine sangha is any relationship that treasures harmony and practices the wisdom of interconnectedness.

Taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, is an inner journey of coming Home to what is True. It is a profound act of devotion and inner commitment to a clear mind, an open heart, and a way of engaging with life that is pervaded with integrity, respect, and compassion...to a life of unreserved wakefulness, to bringing all that is truthful and healing into every aspect of our life. This means that thoughts, words, and

actions are checked. Are they True, kind, appropriate, and timely? We learn to speak and listen without an agenda. Taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, is *Touching the Living Buddha*.

Chris J – Guided Meditation

In the *Lotus Sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha teaches that Buddhahood is inherent in everything and everyone... already present in all of Creation... the Infinite Wisdom, Courage, Compassion, and Peace that the Buddha demonstrated in his lifetime are already within us... available to us... as we awaken to them...

The term *Buddha* simply means *awakened one*... Siddhartha became the Buddha when he attained enlightenment under the bo tree... Five centuries later, Yeshua of Nazareth would become the Christ – the *anointed one* – after his forty days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness... They both simply revealed what was already within them...

The Buddha compared our *Buddha Nature* to a gold nugget buried in dirt... hidden by layers of delusion... who the world tells us we are... what society thinks is important... But, unlike the constantly changing mirage the world presents, our Buddha Nature remains undefiled... pure gold... birthless... deathless... indestructible...

Our Buddhahood is not meant to be an escape from life's challenges... we do not seek enlightenment to transcend these difficulties... rather it compels us to actively engage with life... to be the Heart of Compassion... the Voice of Wisdom... the Peaceful Presence that helps alleviate suffering in the world...

Within each of us nestles the *Seed of Enlightenment*... the awakening to our own *Divine Nature*... our *Christ Consciousness*... an inexhaustible Source of Lovingkindness, Peace, Poise, and Power... As we share our three minutes of Sacred Silence this morning, I invite us to water that seed... to find that nugget of pure gold... to connect with our Source... our *Divine Essence*... and to allow the Gifts of Spirit to flow forth into us... through us... and then, out from us into the world...

Silence – 3:00

O Blessed One, thank you for this gift of shared communion and contemplation... Thank you for the Divine Gifts of Peace, Wisdom, and Compassion... and for the courage to share these Blessings and help our siblings who are suffering... May we always remember that we are all One... and may we never forget who and whose we are ...

All mystical traditions teach that at the level of our Divine Essence, we were never born, and we can never die... we are Co-Eternal with Spirit... and One with all of Creation... If any being suffers, none of us is truly free... *that* is why we practice compassion and lovingkindness...

As Rev. Diana continues her Taizé meditation this morning, we allow her words to reveal to us our divine nature... our Buddhahood... our Christ Consciousness... and we find ourselves *Touching the Living Buddha*...

Rev. Diana – We come to see that the actor is not separate from the action...they become one. In all our actions, we can let the Buddha Nature, the Christ Consciousness or Divine Spark, be present and act for us. Join me in meditation as we practice melding the human and the Divine.

(Adapted from *Touching the Buddha Within* by Sister Dao Nghiem)

Mindful of my inbreath, from the beginning to the end, I breath in. Mindful of my outbreath, from the beginning to the end, I breath out. (Pause)

Enjoying deeply the movement of my inbreath, I breath in. Enjoying deeply the movement of my outbreath, I breath out. (Pause)

Breathing in, I let my Buddha Nature do the breathing. Breathing out, I let the Living Buddha within do the breathing (Pause)

Breathing in, the Buddha is breathing. Breathing out, I enjoy the breathing. (Pause)

The Buddha is breathing, I enjoy the breathing. (Pause)

Breathing in, the Buddha is sitting. Breathing out, I enjoy the sitting. (Pause)

The Buddha is sitting, I enjoy the sitting. (Pause)

Breathing in, the Buddha is the breathing. Breathing out, I Am the breathing. (Pause)

Buddha is the breathing, I Am the breathing. (Pause)

Breathing in, there is only the breathing. Breathing out, there is only the breathing. (Pause)

Only the sitting, only the breathing. Breathing in, there is no sitter. Breathing out, there is no breather. (Pause)

No sitter, no breather. (Pause)

Breathing in, there is Peace in the sitting. Breathing out, there is Joy in the breathing. (Pause)

Peace is the sitting, Joy is the breathing. (Pause)

Breathing in, I know I am breathing in, breathing out, I know I am breathing out. (Pause)

Closing Prayer

There is only One Thing here, and that is Life...breather and breath...sitter and sitting...actor and action...Creator and creation.

Each of us is an outward expression of Life, of all that is...each one containing the Buddha Nature...able in any moment that we choose, to touch the Living Buddha...to let our Sacred Selves lead the way and live through us.

In this Holy Moment of devotional prayer, I speak these words for myself, knowing that they are True for all who are listening.

I take refuge in the Buddha...I find sanctuary in acknowledging my capacity to awaken, to become one who knows unshakeable inner freedom, peace, and compassion.

I take refuge in the dharma...I find sanctuary in the path that leads to the realization of my own Divinity...that helps me to accept change...that reveals my connectedness with all that is...that dissolves suffering and increases my understanding of what is true.

I take refuge in the sangha...I find sanctuary in those beings who are awakened and wise, who inspire and encourage me, who touch me with their unwavering commitment to make the world a better place...inspire me with the simplicity of their lives, and who set before me examples of integrity and harmony so that I may follow in their footsteps.

Thank you, Ground of Being, for this beautiful day and the countless blessings it brings. Thank you for this Beloved Community and the support and comfort it offers to so many. And thank you for this opportunity to come together in meditation and prayer, so that we might walk the straight and narrow path in the week to come.

Trusting in the power of prayer, I rest now, assured that it has done its Good Work. Knowing that each prayer is answered even before it is spoken, I let go and let God. As together we say, And so it is! Amen!

We gently return our awareness to this life...to our bodies, maybe wiggling our fingers, or gently massaging the face...moving the feet...becoming aware of our senses and the sounds in the room...and then opening the eyes and taking 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. We thank you in advance for your gifts. We acknowledge and give thanks for the infinite abundance of Spirit. We are Living in the Overflow!

10:09 Offertory – Open My Eyes, by Karl Anthony

<https://youtu.be/svqHCAfHHOI>

Rev. Diana – Blessing for the Offering

Feel free to grab a cup of something warm next door and meet us back at 10:30 for a Conscious Conversation. We'll bless you on your way with

Rev. Diana & Chris J – Taizé Closing Song


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

Conscious Conversation

Chris N – Opening Prayer

Rev. Diana – Good morning... and welcome, or welcome back...and 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 here at Mystic Heart. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality. We open our doors in welcome, trusting that you will be led to the Guidance and Wisdom of your own Mystic Heart.

Rev. Diana & Chris J – Opening Music

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

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

 **Tienne's Buddhist Prayer (live)**

So let's take a creative journey...calling upon the full power of both mind and heart...engaging the body...and joining with one another in the imaginal realm, in service to the creation of a **Love-Soaked World**.

See and feel with me now, a world in which all beings live from their Highest Potential...from Kindness, Generosity, Peace, Compassion, Joy, and Beauty.

In this world of our creation, all people honor, respect, and care for one another, for all of the life forms that share this beautiful planet with us, and for Mother 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.

By aligning every thought, word, and action with our Vision, we are creating a world in which all people are well-fed... have the safety and comfort of home and a deep sense of purpose and belonging...a world in which health, education, and healthy relationships are supported by social systems grounded in Integrity, Compassion and Wholeness.

Valuing every being for its uniqueness... we practice living truly Authentic lives where vulnerability is celebrated... there is no need to defend or protect. The work we are doing within ourselves shows up as a world free of hatred and violence.

We recognize and appreciate the abundance that surrounds us... greed is a thing of the past, generosity is the norm, 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 recognize the sacred in everyone and everything...we walk in reverence, humility, and gratitude for all that we have been given.

We are creating a new world moment by moment, aligning our actions with our Vision, living these changes first in our own lives, with our families, friends, and neighbors. One

neighborhood, one community at a time, a new world is being born. In this process of profound change, this Beloved Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, Family.

By the power of our deep faith and inspired action, this prayer is acted upon, answered even as it is spoken, for Spirit knows our heart's desire and intent. In full expectation of its Graceful unfolding, and with the deepest humility and gratitude, we release our Word to the Creative Power and Intelligence that I call God... to the One that gets it done...

And so it is!... Amen!

Bringing awareness back to the body, to the senses, to the room, 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 ***Living Buddha, Living Christ***, and the topic of Conversation today is ***Touching the Living Buddha***.

This morning during Taizé, we spent time reflecting on the idea that everything that exists has the capacity to bring forth the Buddha Nature... the Christ Consciousness...the Divine Spark. It is inherent within each one of us. And we did a meditation that helped us to meld our humanness with our Divinity.

Last week during our Conversation, we looked at Impermanence...the truth that says everything in the physical realm is always changing...nothing stays the same. And we talked about how attachment brings suffering in our lives.

This morning, I'd like to extend that conversation in a couple of directions. One important concept in the Buddhist tradition is that, in order to avoid getting stuck (which brings suffering), we must let go of our notions...our knowledge. It teaches that our knowledge is an obstacle to understanding.

What does that mean...our knowledge is an obstacle to understanding?

(when we hang onto what we think we know, there is no room for new information to come in)

Buddhist Master Thich Nhat Hanh says that "when you climb a ladder, unless you abandon the lower step, you will not be able to climb to a higher one..." and that "knowledge is like that. If you are not ready to let go of your knowledge, you cannot get a deeper knowledge of the same thing."

Who are some of the people that understand and practice this principle the most?

(Scientists – if scientists thought they had all the answers, they would stop looking for new answers. All progress would stop)

If our top scientists are willing to put their knowledge aside in the interest of looking for more complete answers, why aren't we?

(need for control; fear of the unknown; need to be right)

The Christian tradition teaches a similar concept. In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul says, "Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much." The Buddha taught that knowledge is an obstacle...that as we let go of notions, of what we think we know, we grow in understanding.

Is this true?

He goes on to say that as we grow in understanding, we also grow in faith.

Can we make that connection? The Buddha taught that faith is a living thing and has to grow; new discoveries bring greater understanding; and in turn, greater understanding brings greater faith. He also taught that greater understanding requires concentration.

What did he mean by that?

(we can't come to understand anything without giving it our focused attention)

And he taught that concentration requires mindfulness.

Is there a difference in your mind between concentration and mindfulness?

(*concentrate* from the Latin means bring toward the center; *mindful* means aware or conscious)

It feels like concentration is the *act* of giving your conscious attention to something, and mindfulness is the *awareness* that you are giving your attention to something. Do you see the difference? So from a Buddhist perspective, mindfulness leads to concentration, which leads to understanding, which leads to deeper faith. In order for any of this to happen, we have to first put aside what we think we know and invite something new.

The Christian tradition might call this inviting the Still, Small Voice...listening for God's Guidance. The Christian Mystical tradition uses a process called Centering Prayer to Consent to God within.

What does that mean? Is anyone here familiar with Centering Prayer? (giving God permission to act in us; to open to the presence and actions of God within; to let *God* pray in *me*; to remove the barriers that allow Grace to flow; to open and receptive to infinite possibility)

How does consenting to the God within build your faith?

(as I give my consent for God to pray in me, I begin to see new possibilities, gain new insights and deeper understanding; my vision becomes clearer, and my life smooths out.

And how does this connect to the Buddhist idea of letting go of knowledge? (we are inviting something beyond our current understanding to be known)

The invitation offered by today's Conversation is to be humble enough to admit we don't really know anything; put aside all we think we know and ask to be shown. Within the All-Knowingness that we call God, Great Spirit, or Infinite Intelligence, lies every answer to every question that could ever, has ever, or will ever be asked. And without consent, "It is the Father's will to give you the Kingdom." All we have to do is ask...listen...and

acknowledge and give thanks for the answers as they come...whether we like them or not.

Let's close in prayer...

Let's get really still...breathing in, I Am aware of my breath. Breathing out, I relax. Breathing in, I Am aware of my breath. Breathing out, I smile.

In community, we acknowledge the One Source of all that is, by whatever name we may call It.

We feel our Oneness with our Source, and with one another.

We feel our Oneness with the animal creatures, and plant creatures, and rock creatures...with the water and the wind.

And we know that we are part of it all.

We give thanks for that awareness and allow it to ground us.

We move into this week, open to greater possibilities...open to greater knowledge and insights...open to a deeper faith that we have ever known before.

We give thanks for this beautiful day, and for the opportunity to gather with our Sangha, with our Spiritual Community, in celebration and communion with God.

We give thanks for this amazing life, and all of the blessings that are constantly showered down upon us, and around us....those gifts that seem graceful and easy...and those circumstances that grow us in patience, resilience, character, and Love...for we know that Grace comes in many forms.

In gratitude, faith, and humility, I release my Word to the Loving and Lawful Presence that I call God, in full faith that my prayer is answered even before it is spoken. It is done...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.

Rev. Diana – 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.

Offertory Music Video – *Work Hard and Be Nice*, by Michael Franti and Spearhead)


<https://youtu.be/cA3hsghzrlq>

Chris N – Blessing for the Offering

Chris N – Invitations

 **The Mystic Heart Book Club is meeting on Tuesdays from 3-5 pm.** We are enjoying great discussions as we read *Conversations With God, Book 1*. Contact Chris Netto or Michael for more information.

 **Please consider joining us at 1:00 on Wednesday for our last weekly work session until we find the *real* new space.**

 **Fast Track to Wellness will gather this week on Thursday from 12 – 2 pm.** We'll be splitting out time between Dr. Joe Dispenza's *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself* and talking about one action that we can commit to in the coming week to promote our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth. Walk-ins are welcome. Donations are appreciated.

Mark Your Calendars...

 **Metaphysical Bible Study will return on Thursday, August 22nd from 3:00 – 5:00 pm.** Join Prayer Practitioner Chris Johnson for a metaphysical romp through the book of Revelation!

There is more information available in the July Bulletin and online.

Information Cards if new people

Prayer Requests: I am available after service for prayer, or fill out a prayer card and I will get your request to our Prayer Team for daily prayer – We invite everyone to help us make a private space for prayer here in the Sanctuary by joining us next door for lunch

Rev. Diana & Chris J – Closing Song

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

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