No Innocent Bystanders

Sunday, September 27, 2026

Chris Johnson, MAT, RScP, with Sherri Dotter, RScP.
Rev. Diana Johnson, IM, RScM, and musician Marsh Brodeur

An Independent Interfaith Community
Practicing the Possible Through Prayer

Taizé

Call to Awareness – 3 Bells

Sherri – Opening Prayer

Chris – Good morning, and welcome. If you're new with us here this morning, my name is Chris Johnson, Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart. I invite you to settle in, focusing your awareness on your breathing… allowing it to ground you as we begin our Taizé Meditation… Feel the Power generated as we join our voices in musical prayer.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Taizé Chants

- ***Welcome Home to Your Mystic Heart***, written by Diana & Chris Johnson
- ***The Greater Good of All***, written by David Roth

Chris – Each of us is here for the Greater Good of All… to uplift those who cross our path…to leave the world just a little more Beautiful, a little more Peaceful than we found it. We are here to be Love in form… to give Spirit a vehicle for Its Infinite Compassion and Generosity. ***We Are the Ones*** our world has been waiting for.

Now, allow the breath to slow just a bit… to become silent… and settle more deeply into the Stillness. Take a moment to consciously connect with our Global Community, with our brothers and sisters of every form and expression. See with the mind's eye, a web of consciousness surrounding and infusing the planet… each of us a radiant spark of Divine Light… a sparkling jewel in Indra's Net… connected with every human being, without exception… the two-legged and four-legged creatures… the winged beings of the air… the swimmers in the Sacred Waters, creepers and slitherers… the plants that give us sustenance and purify our air… the lifeforms below the soil, and the soil itself… the water that flows freely, giving us our very lives…all inextricably connected to and by the Great Mystery… all beings of Radiant Light, the very Spirit of Love in form.

As we feel and know our oneness with All That Is, we acknowledge our responsibility to one another as human family, and as stewards of this beautiful and life-giving planet. With every breath, and in every moment, we are sensing our Oneness, allowing all lines of separation to dissolve…we are leaving an imprint of Grace on all of Creation.

Our contemplations this month have been centered around the idea that ***There is Nothing New Under the Sun***. And yet, in our own time, we are feeling a shift in consciousness… a Great Turning… a felt sense of an old paradigm breaking down and a new one being born. And who will author the storyline of the new paradigm? We will… as we live into the world of our Visioning… It will take all of us… It will take all we've got… and since we are co-creating it together, there will be ***No Innocent Bystanders***…

This Beloved Community has a powerful vision… we call it the *Love-Soaked World*… Charles Eisenstein calls it *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible*… Rabbi Yeshua simply called it the *Kingdom of Heaven*… Heaven is a *participatory event*… we create it by *living into it*… by treating one another like the Divine Beings Spirit created us to be… by remaining mindful of our oneness… remembering that what we do to another – whether human, animal, plant, or environment – we do to ourselves…

Yeshua taught us that Heaven is within us[1]… he also taught that the Kingdom is at hand… "The Kingdom is spread out over the whole earth, but people do not see it[2]…" I believe that he was teaching us that both are true… but we can only see it *out there* after we have found it *in here*… When he said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God," he was inviting us to look within… find the Divine Peace, Love, and Compassion that is our True Nature… then *be* the way those qualities find their way into the world…

The Bhagavad Gita agrees… Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, "Those devotees are very dear to Me who are free from malice toward all living beings, who are friendly, forgiving, and compassionate[3]…" and "They alone see truly who see the Lord the same in every creature… who see the Deathless in the hearts of all that die… Seeing the same Lord everywhere, they do not harm themselves or others… Thus they attain the supreme goal[4]…" In allowing our understanding of Spiritual Truth to guide our actions in the world, we participate in co-creating our Love-Soaked World…

So, how can there be ***No Innocent Bystanders***? We live in a Universe that responds to the contents of our hearts and minds… whether we are aware of it or not… whether we *like* it or not… That makes us co-creators of our environment in every moment… You and I are right here right now by Divine Appointment… there are no accidents in Spirit… there are no coincidences in Spirit… We have been drawn together to co-create this moment… in this place… and the more Love, Peace, and Devotion we generate within ourSelves and radiate outward, the more powerful this moment will be… This is especially true because we share a common goal for our gathering this morning…

But it's the same out in the world… in the *maha workshop*… even though a group might not have a common purpose, each one still contributes to the unfolding of that moment of experience. Each of us contributes something and each receives something… Spirit is ever flowing… We may contribute verbally – sharing in a

conversation… or physically – maybe holding the door or helping carry groceries… or merely by holding the moment with Love and Compassion… beholding the Great Spirit in every face… in all that unfolds…

You have the power to bless each and every experience in your life… Bring forth the Love of God that dwells in your heart… share it in whatever way you can… in thought, word or deed… and you spread a little bit more of the Kingdom of Heaven on your little corner of the earth…

Musical Meditation – *Behold*, by Gary Lynn Floyd

"Somehow, reach down inside you and find a Love that's been there all the time somehow. Right now somebody's broken and sad – they need you to give what you have, right now." What you have to give right now is always enough… whether it's a dollar… a donut… or even if it's only a smile…

Rev. Diana – Guided Meditation

Behold!…gaze upon with your full attention…hold fast with your greatest determination…watch over with your deepest devotion…that is what is meant by *Behold!*

Behold! The Kingdom of God is within you…let the Eye of the Heart be focused inward, keeping the Kingdom in your field of awareness.

Behold! The Kingdom of God is at hand…everywhere you look…everyone you meet…every circumstance you encounter…Let Divine Perception see and know the Truth…

Behold! The word alone reminds us that the Kingdom we expect to see is the Kingdom we will find…the Kingdom we are willing to live *from* and *as* is the Kingdom we will create.

Take a moment to consider…what is it that you see when you look out into the world? What do you allow to capture your attention? (Pause)

What do you see when you look inward, to your own heart? To your own state of mind? (Pause)

Can you choose to give attention to the Goodness that is forever unfolding?

(Pause)

Can you choose to focus on the Peace, Love, Joy and Beauty that you are?

(Pause)

Can you choose to acknowledge the thousands of tiny miracles that happen, right before your eyes, everyday? (Pause)

Each time you answer these questions with a *Yes*, and follow that choice with action, you have taken one more step into the Kingdom of Heaven…you have helped to create the Kingdom on earth. The mystics of the ages have agreed that both heaven and hell are states of consciousness…they are choices we make…they are what we attend to. *Behold!*

Chris – We cannot behold the Kingdom of Heaven in the human world with our outer eyes… the appearance is too overwhelming… it takes *inner vision* and our active participation to manifest it… it's a *do-it-yourself project*…

Please join me in prayer

Divine Beloved… Holy Spirit of Love, thank you for your presence within our hearts… for the knowing that wherever we stand is Holy Ground because we are the hands and hearts of God in the human world. Help us to remember the holiness of our own souls, and may we always behold your light shining through everyone and everything. May we be ever alert to see and feel evidence of the Kingdom of Heaven breaking into the human world. May we always remember that we are instruments of Divine Compassion, Mercy, and Love. Knowing that this prayer is answered even as it is spoken, I release my Word with profound gratitude, and watch it unfold with joyful expectation. Amen.

I invite us now to return our awareness to this moment, to our bodies… our senses… the atmosphere in the room… to gently open our eyes as it feels right, and to behold whatever is before us. Take a look around at who is sharing in celebration this morning… your co-creators… your Spiritual Family… and take a moment to honor each one for sharing space with you this morning…

Love Offering

As we prepare to close this morning's Taizé Meditation, we offer the opportunity for you to share of your financial good in support of the work we do, should you care to do so.

It is by your generous gifts that we can continue the Good Work of supporting your spiritual evolution and engaging in the greater Community.

If you're joining us online, at mysticheart.org you can use a PayPal Donate Button, a Venmo qr code, or our mailing address to make your contribution. We thank you in advance for your heartfelt generosity.

Offertory Music Video:

He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother, by The Hollies
https://youtu.be/ikT7Cp9Nu14

Chris – Blessing for the Offering

Brief Invitations

- ***A Toast to Murder: Secrets Pair Best With Wine*, Friday, October 23rd, 6:30 pm.** This is a five-course Murder Mystery dinner, with April and Maile leading the fun, and dinner prepared by Rev. Diana. This is a Mystic Heart Fun Raiser. Two tickets have been paid for. There are only 18 seats available. **Tickets are $40/person.**

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Closing Song

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

Conscious Conversation

Sherri – Opening Prayer

Chris – Welcome back. If you're new with us here this morning, my name is Chris Johnson, and I am a credentialed Prayer Practitioner here at Mystic Heart Spiritual Center. We are an Independent Interfaith Community that teaches Universal Principles and Practical Spirituality, tracing the common threads of Truth that run through all the world's great spiritual traditions. Our job is to point you inward, to the Wisdom that lives within your own Mystic Heart.

Are you ready to get this Conversation going with a little bit of music? Here we go.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Opening Music

- ***Welcome to the Mystic Heart***, written by Diana & Chris Johnson
- ***One Big Family***, written by Robin Hackett & Gary Lynn Floyd
- ***I Am (As God Created Me)***, written by Michael Stillwater

Chris – Wow! Love! Light! Glory! That's some powerful stuff! We're going to give that chant a rest for a while and swap in ***We Shall Be Known*** for our October gatherings, but it'll be back!

In this elevated and inspired consciousness we are ready to collectively direct our Creative Energies toward a Powerful Vision…a Vision of the world we wish to live in. Visioning is a Powerful form of prayer that gives the Creative Power of the Universe a blueprint for the creation of a ***Love-Soaked World***. Because if the world is ever going to change, it needs to start somewhere. Someone needs to *create* the Vision, needs to *speak to* the Vision, needs to *live into* the Vision. And today's title, ***No Innocent Bystanders***, means no one's off the hook! So I invite you now to settle into the Imaginal Realm… that liminal space between the prayer and its answer… take a slow, deep breath, and consciously engage every bit of creative power and emotion at your command.

We envision ourselves now in a world of our creation… where all humans recognize, and live from, their inherent Freedom… from their deepest Wisdom and Generosity, and their most Loving nature… thoughtful of the impact their thoughts, words, and actions have on one another, the community, and the planet… ours is a world without greed, where there is abundance in simply having enough… where nutritious food,

clean water and air are readily available to all beings… where warm, comfortable, and affordable housing is universal… where all beings feel a sense of safety, belonging, and contribution… We affirm these many blessings with a Powerful *Yes!*

Ours is a world where leaders practice integrity and ethical behavior, leading by example and inspiring trust and engagement among people… a world where policies and social systems support mental and physical health, education, and healthy relationships, and encourage ecological responsibility and sustainability.

In this world of our creation, all beings work and play at whatever feeds their soul and are well compensated for their Service…where authenticity and vulnerability are not only welcomed but celebrated…where the Peace we cultivate within ourselves shows up as a world free of violence, hatred, or indifference…where freedom of thought and open, respectful conversation is modeled, supported and promoted. We affirm these many blessings with a Powerful *Yes!*

Ours is a world where there is respect among people of all nations, and for the fundamental dignity of every human… where the Love that we are here to share is given freely to whomever our hearts are called to love… where we have moved beyond all lines of separation, and live as one human family, caring for one beautiful planet with the reverence she deserves.

We recognize that transformation is an on-going process, and especially in times of great change, people benefit from working, playing, and simply being together. And so this Community stands as an open and welcoming place for all who seek support, belonging, and a sense of Family… it redefines *Church* as a place of Self-Discovery, Authenticity, Kindness, Radical Inclusion, and Unconditional Love. We affirm these many blessings with a Powerful *Yes!*

It is by the Power and Intelligence of the One Life moving through each one of *us* that this prayer is acted upon, answered even as it is spoken. As one by one, we commit to acting upon and living *into* and *from* this Vision, it cannot be otherwise… we live in a Responsive Universe! Our Word carries Power. And so it is with deep faith, profound gratitude and great Joy that I release my Word to the ***One Who Gets It Done***…And so it is!…Amen!

Bringing awareness back to the body, to the room, to this beautiful life, and to the Spiritual Family that is sharing this space with you this morning… There has been a shift in energy… We have just set a Powerful intention… Our prayer is rippling out into the race consciousness, doing its Good Work. And there's nothing that anyone can do about it… our loving act of defiance for this morning. Doesn't it feel good?

Our theme this month is ***Nothing New Under the Sun***, and this morning we explore the idea that there are ***No Innocent Bystanders***.

If you were here for Taizé, this will be a bullet-point review, so that we can use it as our starting place for a Conscious Conversation.

Our Meditation was based on our Vision of a Love-Soaked World, and what it might require of us to bring it into fruition. The inspired vision of a Love-Soaked World is our version of Charles Eisenstein's *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible*, or of Rabbi Yeshua's *Kingdom of Heaven*. There really *is* ***Nothing New Under the Sun***!

Yeshua taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us… and that it is "spread out over the whole earth, but people do not see it." He told us to "seek first the kingdom of Heaven" within us by finding the Divine Peace, Love, and Compassion that is our True Nature through meditation and contemplation. We will behold Heaven *out there* only after we find it *in here*. Heaven is *participatory* – we bring it into our experience by *living it in the present*. We treat one another with the great Love and Respect due to the Divine Spirit who is expressing as that other being.

We got some pointers from Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "Those devotees are very dear to Me who are free from malice toward all living beings, who are friendly, forgiving, and compassionate…" and "They alone see truly who see the Lord the same in every creature… Seeing the same Lord everywhere, they do not harm themselves or others…"

The reason that there are no innocent bystanders is that we live in a Universe that responds to the contents of our hearts and minds… and that makes us co-creators of our environment and our experience in every moment… we are where we are and with whom we are by Divine Appointment… Even doing nothing affects our experience and that of those with us. Spirit *needs* us as vehicles for what is wanting to emerge… humanity's *next yet-to-be*…

We cannot behold the Love-Soaked World with our outer eyes… it takes *inner vision* and our active participation to manifest it… it's a group endeavor – a *do-it-yourself project*…

Let's take this as our first question: If the Love-Soaked World is participatory, what are some of the ways we can begin to live into it, when there seems to be no tangible evidence of it out there? How do we actively participate?

What are some interpersonal behaviors we would expect to see in a Love-Soaked World?

Is it safe to treat people we don't know as if they were the Christ or the Buddha? Is it safe *not* to?

OK, I want to shift gears here and give you some background on today's topic. I found an essay by Lingqi Zhao, of St. Stephen's Episcopal School, an experimental high school attached to Beijing Normal University in China. He crafted his award-winning essay around a quote from Beat Generation writer William S. Burroughs who said, "After all, there are no innocent bystanders."

Zhao noted that “A deep notion reverberates through moral philosophy, social justice, and personal responsibility within his statement.” He further states that there can be no moral or ethical neutrality, since “everybody forms part of the moral equation,” whether they act or not. To be silent in the face of injustice or cruelty is to “contribute to the environment in which this act can take place,” and thus to abdicate innocence.

So, is there any such thing as an innocent bystander? What condition would make that possible?

Do we have a collective responsibility to the group we are interacting with? Are we “our brothers’ keeper?”

At the end of his essay, Zhao quoted Elizabeth Bowen from her World War II novel, ***The Heat of the Day***, in which she wrote, "In the light of wrongdoing not to act is to act, and innocence of heart an infinitely more complicated and subtler thing than it sounds."

Let’s start with the first part: "In the light of wrongdoing not to act is to act.” What is she saying here? (passivity is a choice. When you witness something wrong, harmful, or unjust and choose to look the way, your inaction is not neutral. By doing nothing, you are actively choosing to let the wrongdoing happen, effectively enabling or condoning it.)

What about the second half: “innocence of heart [is] an infinitely more complicated and subtler thing than it sounds." (If someone insists on remaining "innocent" or naive, they often ignore the complex realities of the world, refuse to see the harm happening around them, and inadvertently hurt others through their ignorance. True goodness requires navigating a complicated world, making difficult choices, and actively engaging with wrongdoing, rather than just keeping one's own hands clean.)

What do you think causes people not to act in situations of cruelty, bullying, or other injustice?

People’s unwillingness to help someone in need is called the *bystander effect*. According to Brittanica[5], American social psychologists Bibb Latané and John Darley’s studies of the bystander effect revealed a five-step decision-making process people go through before deciding to act.

1. **Notice** that something is happening.
2. **Interpret** the situation as an emergency.
3. **Assume personal responsibility** to do something.
4. **Choose** an appropriate way to help.
5. **Implement** the action.

Failing at any of these steps results in inaction.

Where do you think most people get stuck? (Assuming responsibility)

Why does that happen? (don't want to get involved – the bully might turn on me.)

- **Diffusion of responsibility:** People feel less personal obligation to act because they assume someone else will step in.
- **Social influence:** Individuals watch how others react and copy their inaction, assuming that if no one else is helping, it is not an emergency.
- **Evaluation apprehension:** People worry about looking foolish, being wrong, or facing social judgment if they overreact.

How might this look different in a Love-Soaked World? (people would have the courage to take responsibility to act, and they wouldn't be judged by others. Rather than diffusing responsibility, everyone would rush in to help)

Is there anything else that wants to be spoken?

It feels like we can't do enough to make a difference. But what you have to give right here in this now moment – and in every now moment – is always enough… whether it's a dollar… a donut… or even if it's only a smile… We *are* the ones we've been waiting for… We are the ones who will raise our prophetic voice to call out injustice… We refuse to claim to be innocent bystanders… and instead, we are writing a new story… creating a new paradigm… on Earth as it is in Heaven…

Let's Close in prayer…

Divine Presence, Source of all Life, and Breath of the universe, we gather our hearts in this moment of the Great Turning. We stand at the threshold of a new dawn, conscious of the deep fractures that divide us, yet anchoring ourselves in the truth of our sacred interconnectedness.

Forgive our moments of separation. Soften the walls of fear, judgment, and hostility that we build between ourselves and our neighbors. Remind us that the pain of one is the pain of all, and the healing of one heals us all.

Pour out a spirit of deep unity upon all of humankind. Help us to see past the illusions of race, nation, creed, political ideology, and status, so that we may recognize the shared spark of divinity in every human face. Grant us the courage to listen with empathy, the humility to learn from our differences, and the strength to bridge our divides with love.

Awaken us to our collective responsibility as stewards of this Earth and guardians of one another. In this time of transition, our shared vulnerability become our greatest strength. Guide our leaders, our communities, and our families to act not out of self-interest, but for the common good of all generations to come.

May we walk forward into this great shift hand in hand, woven together in peace, compassion, and a fierce commitment to justice. Let our unity be the light that guides us through the darkness of change into a world of harmony and renewal. Amen.

Love Offering

Thank you so much for joining us here today. We're going to bring this part of the morning to a close, but before we do, we'd like to invite you to join in the celebration of the work we are doing in the world by sharing of your financial good, if you choose to do so. If you are joining us online, you can go to **mysticheart.org** to use our PayPal Donate Button, scan our Venmo qr code, or to find our mailing address.

We are an independent, self-supporting organization, and your financial gifts are what make it possible for us to do our work and provide this beautiful and safe space to gather. We thank you in advance for your generous hearts and gifts.

As we pass our basket this morning, please enjoy this updated blast from the past.

Offertory Music Video

Fly Like an Eagle, by the Steve Miller Band https://youtu.be/p8MTP0TOFsM

Sherri – Blessing for the Offering

Sherri – Invitations

All regularly scheduled classes and groups are taking place this week.

Looking Ahead…

Goodwater Crossing Garden Lunch, Tuesday, October 6th, meet at 10:30 in the garden, with lunch following. Also, Mystic Heart hosts dinner at Goodwater Crossing on the second Friday of every month – for October it's Friday the 9th. Please contact Rev. Diana if you would like to participate in either of these.

Starting Wednesday afternoon October 7th, our Wednesday book study and support circle will start a new book: *The Triumph of Principles*, by Benjamin Riggs

***A Toast to Murder: Secrets Pair Best With Wine*, Friday, October 23rd, 6:30 pm. This is a five-course Murder Mystery dinner, with April and Maile leading the fun, and dinner prepared by Rev. Diana. This is a Mystic Heart Fun Raiser. Two tickets have been paid for. There are only 18 seats available. Tickets are $40/person Bring a friend… bring two. But get your tickets soon…they're bound to sell out.**

Our Spring Retreat is scheduled for March 11th – 14th at the Gathering Place at Lake Shasta. Total cost is $300 per person; your $150 deposit is due November 1st, and the balance is due February 1st. Cost includes all meals, materials, and lodging. There are 20 – 24 spots available, on a first-paid first-served basis. Contact Rev. Diana for more information.

Watch your email or get on the WhatsApp Group Chat for more information on new events coming up in the months ahead. If you're not on the WhatsApp group and want to be, please let Rev. Diana know.

Information Cards *only if new people*

Prayer Requests: I am available after service for prayer, in our beautiful Prayer Room or fill out a prayer card and I will get your request to our Prayer Team for daily prayer.

Rev. Diana, Chris, & Marsh – Closing Song

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

Notes:

[1] Gospel of Luke 17:21
[2] Gospel of Thomas, Logion 113
[3] Bhagavad Gita, 12.13
[4] Ibid., 13.27-28
[5] https://www.britannica.com/topic/bystander-effect

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