

This Season, Give gift of your presence

Bells are ringing, lights are twinkling. Remember you are a precious gift to this Earthplane. The very best present you bring to anyone this season is the healing, wonderful, magnificent gift of your presence! By presence I mean when you look someone in their eyes and truly mean it when you say “Happy Holidays,” when you show up fully in the now and your vibration shouts with joy!

There is no light powerful enough on this planet that can equal your inner light. You, I, we are the light of the world. We are spirits on a human journey and as spirits inhabiting this human form our light is magnificent. The only reason we don't recognize this is because we have been taught to play small by people who were also taught to play small.

In her book *A Return to Love* Marianne Williamson says “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightening about shrinking so that others won't feel insecure around you.

“We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. As we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

The magic of this season reminds us to shine, light up and spread goodwill towards all people.

The metaphysics of the holidays represents our willingness to remember who we are. To be born again into our magnificence, our brilliance, our worth and value and our compassion. Imagine what we could accomplish if we remembered who we are! The thought is an awesome one. If we could remember we are the Christ...within, there would be only glad tidings and great joy. Just as Scrooge awakens to a new day in Charles Dickens' *A Christ-*

mas Carol, we too can let go of the past and step into the now.

Let us celebrate together during this Advent Season that we are worthy, deserving and we are here to share our gifts. Let us show up and be fully present in each holy instant. Our presence is our gift to the world, do not underestimate that.

As we awaken to the divine presence within us, our vibrations will attract whatever we need to bring our gifts to the world. We pray together:

Lord, I acknowledge the Light that is within me and all of my sisters and brothers. Just as a child lets go of toys that no longer are needed, I let go of old thoughts and ideas that no longer serve me. I let go of the old resentments toward people that keep me stuck in my lower self and are a product of my conditioning. During this season of lights, I rekindle my light within. I fan that light to become a brilliant glow that permeates all of my thoughts and feelings and purifies my inner self. I step into this precious present moment and commit to showing up fully in all of my relationships, looking at my sisters and brothers in the eyes with love, compassion, forgiveness and joy.

Namaste

Jane Zoltek, *ssj-tosf* Editor



Ritual of candlelighting

Perhaps your childhood memories of the season of Advent are quite vivid: lighting purple and rose candles on the Advent wreath, opening the miniature doors of an Advent calendar.

In the Catholic world of our childhoods, Advent candles reminded us to be patient. The gifts and goodies of Christmas were coming, but we needed to wait calmly for them. Christmas wasn't going to come until after that fourth candle was lit and all the doors on the Advent calendar were open. We marked the season's progress by the candles. Candles meant pausing and not rushing ahead too quickly to the end of the season.

Now, as adults, candlelight continues to remind us to be patient and still. Our energy might begin to sag as winter sets in, and the ritual of candlelighting can provide a lift to our spirits. It can bring our attention back to this moment, so our minds aren't jumping around as they can easily do in December. Observing candlelight for a little pause in our day can bring awareness to "the sacrament of the present moment." We can be present to Life, remembering to be grateful for warmth, light, and everyday blessings.

To light a candle by myself is one of my favorite prayers. The very act of lighting the candle is prayer. There is the sound of striking the match, the whiff of smoke after blowing it out, the way the flame flares up and then sinks...All this and the darkness beyond my small circle of light is prayer.

(Brother David Steindl-Rast)



Single candle can defy, define the darkness

As the winter solstice nears, dark nights envelop us and invite introspection. Light a candle or two this week, mindfully and deliberately. Then sit for a moment and try a simple breathing exercise: Breathe in as you count to four; exhale as you count to six. Focus on the breath, on the cool air entering your nostrils, the warm air leaving. Four counts in, six counts out. Watch the flame dance, taking in the fragrance as the wax slowly melts. Let this be a meditation and prayer to still your spirit and bring peace to you as you prepare for the holiday festivities.

Think about . . .

Christmas and holiday cards will be rolling in, reminding us how many wonderful people grace our lives. New friends, old friends, family near and far. We see pictures of growing children, of newlyweds calling to mind the many seasons of life. Cards with beautiful messages of hope, gratitude, love, unity and goodness reflect the sender's wishes for us and the world at large. One is filled with joy when each card is opened, knowing someone has thought of you again this year. Thomas Merton says "Life is this simple: we are living in a world that is absolutely transparent and the divine is shining through it all the time."

Everything we do is a practice. How we go about doing things is a practice. Open each card with care. Look at the envelope and handwriting, the stamp that was chosen for the card. Practice gratitude, practice paying attention, practice doing good deeds, practice breathing slowly when life throws you a curve ball. We count our blessings and use our daily tasks to remind us to be present and awake.

Christmas Blessings to you!