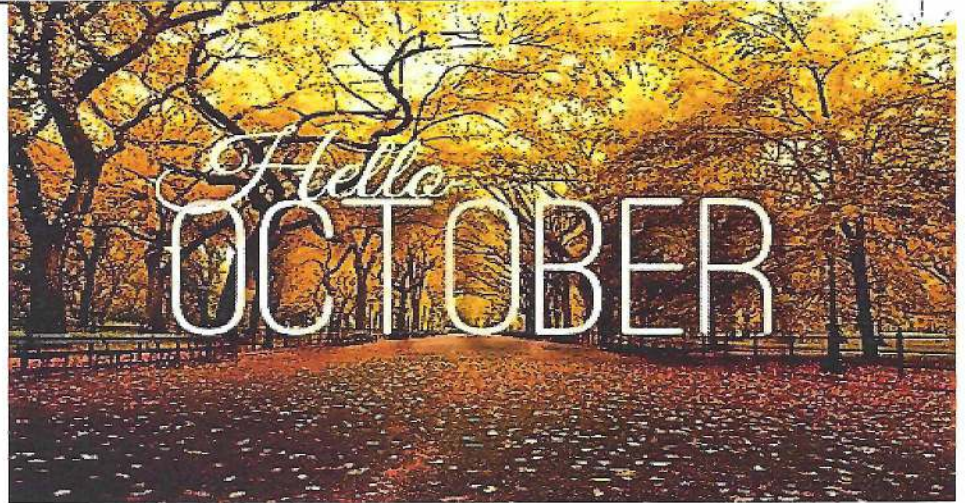


Letting Go...

As we watch leaves fluttering to the ground this October, we are reminded that nature's cycles are mirrored in our lives. Autumn is a time for letting go and releasing things that been a burden. All religious traditions pay tribute to such acts of relinquishment. Fall is the right time to practice getting out of the way and letting Spirit take charge of our lives.



Buddhist teacher Sharon Saltzberg writes in *LOVING-KINDNESS* about one of the offshoots of letting go: "Generosity has such power because it is characterized by the inner quality of letting go or relinquishing. Being able to let go, to give up, to renounce, to give generously—these capacities spring from the same source within us. When we practice generosity, we open to all of these liberating qualities simultaneously. They carry us to a profound knowing of freedom, and they also are the loving expression of that same state of freedom." Fall, then, is the perfect season to give generously of our time and talents to others.

Acknowledging impermanence

Autumn reminds us of the impermanence of everything. We have experienced the budding of life in spring, the flowerings and profusions of summer. Now leaves fall and bare branches

remind us of the fleeting nature of all things. Harold Kushner Jewish writer in *The Lord is My Shepherd* suggests that when we contemplate fall's changes, we grow more appreciative of all the beauties that surround us. The poet Wallace Stevens writes, "Death is the mother of beauty." What those words say to me is that we cherish the beauty of a sunrise, of autumn, of a relationship, of a child's hug, precisely because those things will not be around forever and neither will we be around to enjoy them.

Fall also brings home to our consciousness our own death and the challenge to live every single day to the fullest.

God graciously placed cues and reminders that can regularly turn us to prayer...morning and evening; Sabbath and work; winter, spring, summer and fall.

Editor
Jane Zoltek, ssj-tosf

Autumn Praise...

I praise you, Lord, for autumn: for falling temperatures and morning chill, trees turned gold and red, brown and orange, falling leaves and blowing leaves, the smell of burning leaves, the joy of leaf-pile jumping.

I praise you, Lord, for autumn: the interplay of outside temperatures and inside warmth, the promise of cider and pumpkin bread, the blessing of blankets and sweaters.

I praise you, Lord, for autumn: the beauty and hope in the change of season, the promise that the coming of autumn heralds another ending, a new beginning, and the wonder of another winter, another spring, another summer, yet to come.

*A doctor can save your life.
A lawyer can defend your life.
A soldier can give you a peaceful life. But only GOD can give you an everlasting life. Amen!*

Cultivate Positive Attitude

BALANCE, HARMONY

When we prepare ourselves for a deeper, inward journey, we must first examine our attitudes and priorities. There are people who appear to have everything but live miserable lives. Others seem to have very little and yet are filled with abundance and joy. This is proof that our attitude is not created by what we have but by what we are. Our mental state does not own us: we have the power to change it if we wish but to change a mental state we must first desire to do so. Once we desire a more positive mental state, we can then seek ways to create this.

One way is through developing positive attitudes such as gratitude, appreciation and thankfulness. Showing appreciation and gratitude is not only good for others it is also good for us. By being appreciative we are acknowledging that we are fortunate recipients of life and its abundance, not victims of that mysterious thing called "circumstances." These qualities can be cultivated within us through inward reflection. They come as a result of wisdom, of experience, of realizing the precious gift of life and the reality of our higher selves. Once we learn to look deeper within ourselves, we will see abundance, tolerance and love—aspects of the Divine within—instead of scarcity and judgment.

Many of our so called primitive cultures would not dream of going through a day without giving thanks to the Earth for her abundant fruits, to the Sun for the warmth and life it brings, as well as for the food they eat and the stars that cloak the skies at night. In our modern civilization, it is strange that few people even think of offering thanks to Mother Earth who supplies us with everything we need to live, love and gain experience.

Native Americans and other indigenous peoples realize that the Earth is a very evolved sentient life form, a Goddess. She has protected and nurtured us for millions of years. She has endured our hatred of each other, our disregard of the delicate balance of her nature, our explosions, dumping of radioactive waste—the list is endless. She continues to protect us from the perils of outer space and provides us with a home suited to our needs. It is very strange that few of us give thanks for this but instead take it for granted.

Each day we can cultivate a positive attitude by reflecting upon the beauty of nature and give thanks for its abundance. Offer your thanks to the Sun for its warmth and life, the Earth for her abundant fruits, the trees and the stars. If possible do this exercise outside in nature. Open yourself up by being very still and peaceful. Do not be in a mentally active state but be open and receptive. Send out your thanks from your mind's eye or imagination as a brilliant white light.

Balance is another word for harmony and necessary because without it there's inner turmoil. If you are out of balance, you won't grow as you could if all your parts are unified and nurtured. If you decide not to take care of yourself as a whole, you will live with the consequences of your choices in life.

Probably the most important aspect of healing your emotional life is to release all judgments about feelings. Love yourself enough to experience any and all feelings. Feel what there is to feel, be it sadness, anger, fear or anything. This is being fully present.

Gift yourself with the gift of forgiveness. Choose to totally and completely forgive everyone and everything from the beginning of time right up to the present moment. Forgive your unforgiveness if there is someone you are unable to forgive. Choose to be free of all resentment. A complete opening of the heart is through enlightenment. Create value or worth in doing what is best for your growth as a human and spiritual being without infringing on the boundaries of others. True growth is unfoldment. Only you know what is right to bring your life into balance.