



Sunshine
Cathedral



Spirit & Truth
A Samaritan Press Publication
Sunshine Cathedral

SunshineCathedral.org
1480 SW Ninth Ave - Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315 USA

November & December 2020
Dial-a-prayer: 954.462.2004 (6)

Spiritual Heroes

November 3: St. Malachy (1094 – 1148) - Archbishop of Armagh. St. Malachy was the first native born Irish saint to be canonized. Malachy died in the arms of his soul-mate, St. Bernard of Clarivau. Their monastic community called them a “two-fold treasure.” When they were reunited after being apart from work or travel, Bernard would “shower Malachy with kisses.” They died 5 years apart, but are buried together, wearing each other’s habits.

St. Martin de Porres (1570 – 1639) - The patron saint of mixed-race people, barbers, innkeepers, and public health workers. He was the son of a Spanish nobleman, Don Juan de Porres, and Ana Velázquez, a freed slave from Panama. Legend attributes levitation (and other amazing feats) to him. In Santeria, he is known as Papa Candeló.

November 4: Agnes Sanford (1897 – 1982) - the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries and the wife of an Episcopal priest. She became a world renowned healer, and taught that the bible contained the energy of faith which could work miracles. She believed that healing was possible if we would “pray down” our doubts and expect something good to happen. Sanford acknowledged that effective prayer principles were universal, not limited to any one religion and she firmly believed that “experience comes before theology.” Visualizing success, affirming our Good, giving thanks for our Good, imagining healing energy flowing through us, and quoting affirmative bible verses were among the prayer techniques she offered. She believed the return of Christ had happened at Pentecost, and that Christ continues to return every time we extend love, kindness, or forgiveness in our world.

November 8: Archangel Uriel - Where a fourth archangel is added to Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael (to represent the four cardinal points), Uriel is generally the fourth. Uriel is listed as the fourth by Gregory the Great, and in the angelology of Pseudo-Dionysius. Uriel appears in the Second Book of Esdras found in the Biblical apocrypha in which the prophet Ezra asks God a series of questions and Uriel is sent by God to address him. Some believe him to be the one who "stands at the Gate of Eden with a fiery sword."

Ralph Waldo Trine (1866 – 1958) – philosopher and New Thought author lived to the age of 92. Earned a Master of Arts degree from Knox College. Taught at Emerson College and influenced E. W. Kenyon, the father of the “Word of Faith” movement. Trine was influenced by Emerson and Emmet

Fox, and his principles were echoed by Napoleon Hill. Trine taught, “To get up each morning with the resolve to be happy...is to condition circumstances instead of being conditioned by them.”

Napoleon Hill (1883 - 1970) - Self-help guru and personal development expert, Hill was inspired by Dale Carnegie and Charles Haanel. Hill was an advisor to Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Hill believed fear and selfishness contribute to failure. He was one of the thinkers who inspired Norman Vincent Peale. Hill believed, “Every adversity, every failure, every heartache carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit.” His most famous saying may be, “Whatever your mind can conceive and believe, [it] can achieve, regardless of how many times you have failed in the past.”

November 9: Martyrs of Kristallnacht (1938)— As part of the buildup to what became the “final solution,” the Nazis mounted a coordinated assault on the entire Jewish community of Germany. In one night the storm troopers burned down 191 synagogues, destroyed 7,500 shops, rounded up 20,000 Jewish men for “protective custody” at Buchenwald concentration camp, and killed 100 Jews. The pogrom became known as Kristallnacht, or Crystal Night, for all the broken windows.

November 11: Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)—Philosopher. A prolific author whose writings were important in the development of Existentialism, Kierkegaard barely saw himself a Christian. He devoted himself to exposing official Christianity, and especially the Church of Denmark, as fraudulent. He originally planned to go into the Lutheran ministry, but instead chose a life of introspection and writing. Compared with the New Testament, he charged, official Christianity was nothing more than play-acting.

Daisy Baum (1856 – 1923) – an early teacher of and writer about Divine Science. She personally overcame an anxiety disorder through the principles of New Thought healing. The following is from a prayer from her book, *Individual Responsibility*: “[God], I acknowledge thy loving goodness everywhere, even within myself. Thou art the Life that animates me. Thou art the Power that sustains me. Thou art the Wisdom that heals me. Thou art the Love that surrounds me. I rest in, and trust thy unfailing Intelligence to guide me in all my ways...”

November 12: Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (1651-1694)—Poet and scholar. Born near Mexico City, Sister Juana had a passion for learning that led to her becoming the first great poet of Latin America and early champion of equality for women in the church.

November 13: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850 – 1917) – “Mother Cabrini” (originally from Italy) founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was beatified on this day in 1938. In 1946 she was canonized, the first naturalized American citizen to be recognized as a saint. She is the patron saint of immigrants.

November 14: George Hegel (1770 – 1831) - a German philosopher and believer in Oneness who developed the dialectic process of thought: Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis. He believed that in thinking we develop a thesis, then question it and develop its opposite, and finally put the two together to form a unity. The whole concept is of course greater than any of its individual parts. Synthesis always transcends dichotomy. It is the idea that is absolute, or real...only the idea is really real. He also believed in the unity of spirit and matter, of the divine and human. He wrote, “God is the system of relationships in which all things move and have their being and their significance. In [humans], thought, realizing itself as part of the absolute, transcends individual limitations and purposes and catches underneath universal strife the hidden harmony of all things.”

Samuel Seabury (1729 –1796) - was the first American Episcopal bishop, the second Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and the first Bishop of Connecticut. He was a known rival of Alexander Hamilton. In the Spring of 1783, a meeting of ten Episcopal clergy in Woodbury, Connecticut elected Seabury bishop. There were no Anglican bishops in America to consecrate him and so he sailed to London. In England, however, his consecration wasn't possible because, as an American, he could not take the oath of loyalty to the British monarch. So he approached the Scottish Episcopal Church. Seabury was consecrated in Aberdeen on November 14, 1784. To the present day, the American liturgy adheres to the main features of the Scottish Holy Communion rite in one of its Liturgies. The anniversary of his consecration is now a lesser feast day on the calendars of the Episcopal Church (United States) and the Anglican Church of Canada.

November 20: Helen Zagat (1893 – 1975) – Helen Zagat is the author of the classic text, *Faith & Works*. A graduate of Barnard College and a former modern dancer, she became a Divine Science minister and was the pastor of the Church of Divine Unity in NYC. Her ministry spanned more than 30 years. She wrote, “In our awareness of God as Omnipresence, we feel that Spirit cares for each one of us. We are never alone.” She stressed 5 attributes of God: Life, Wisdom, Love, Power, & Substance.

November 21: Nichiren Daishonin (1222 – 1282) - a Japanese Buddhist monk who taught that serenity, happiness, well-being, and enlightenment were available to everyone and could simply be attained through mantra meditation. The mantra he offered was “Nam Myoho Renge Kyo” (referring to a Buddhist text which Nichiren believed contained all that was needed for enlightenment. The text was believed to be so powerfully true that simply chanting its title would impart its benefits). Nichiren Buddhism is now a major Buddhist school of thought.

November 23: Clement of Alexandria (circa 150 CE – 215 CE) - had a capacity for blending Christian Thought, Platonism, and Stoic philosophy. His thinking contributed to Christian Gnosticism. Clement believed that Jesus was the Logos, and as the Logos was the supreme quality, Jesus was the supreme expression of God. Clement believed that faith, knowledge, and love were needed for a full experience of the Realm of God.

The Gnostics. Gnostics believed evil could be overcome by knowledge of the Truth, and “salvation” is obtained by knowledge of the divine. They had a mystical Christology, believing Christ to be an emanation from the First Cause. A significant number of faithful Christians in the Mediterranean would come to be called “gnostic” (for their belief in the salvific power of gnosis, which is, knowledge). Though the Gnostics didn’t prevail as the dominating force of Christianity, there were early, faithful Gnostic communities whose writings are as old or older than some of the writings that made it into the New Testament.

November 24: Baruch Spinoza (1632 – 1677) - He was a student of the Jewish Talmud and the Torah, as well as of Kabala. Spinoza was also influenced by Maimonides and Descartes. A pantheist, he believed God to be the very Substance of the Universe. He also challenged people to think in abstract ways, saying, “God is not only the process of thinking, God is also the thought itself.”

November 25: C. Alan Anderson (1930 – 2012) – held a PhD in Philosophy from Boston University. His doctoral dissertation was titled, “Horatio W. Dresser and the Philosophy of New Thought.” He developed what is believed to be the first New Thought website. He wrote *God in a Nutshell*, *The Problem is God: The Selection & Care of Your Personal God*, and with his wife (Dr. Deb Whitehouse), *New Thought: An American Spirituality*.

November 26: Sojourner Truth (1797-1883)—Abolitionist preacher. Born a slave to a Dutch family in New York, Sojourner (a name she chose later

in life) was freed when slavery there was abolished. She became noted as a passionate itinerant preacher and a legend even in her own life. She devoted her life to the antislavery cause, and later to women's suffrage and equal rights.

November 27: Charles Haanel (1866 – 1949) – author of *The Master Key System*, a book that laid out principles that Napoleon Hill credited with helping him succeed in his work. Haanel taught: "There is a world within — a world of thought and feeling and power; of light and life and beauty; and, although invisible, its forces are mighty." Haanel is quoted in the popular self-help book, *The Secret*.

Harvey Milk (1931-1978)—First openly gay elected official (USA). Milk ran for a seat as a City Supervisor in San Francisco in order to stand for the rights of people without a voice —blue collar workers, the elderly, racial minorities, and especially gays and lesbians. He expected he would die violently, and was shot five times at close range by another politician angered at his stand for gays. That night 40,000 people took to the streets in a candle light vigil outside City Hall.

November 28: James Allen (1864 – 1912) – best known for his book *As A Man Thinketh*, which has been mass produced since its original publication in 1903. His work is still lauded by motivational speakers and inspirational writers. Allen counseled: “[One’s] mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild.”

November 29: Dorothy Day (1897-1980)—Prophet of social justice. It was said at her death that she was “the most influential, interesting, and significant figure” in the history of American Catholicism. Committed to social justice and pacifism, she founded a lay movement, the Catholic Worker movement, which sought to live out the radical gospel commandment of love in the social and political realm.

November 30: Apostle Andrew (First Century) – Patron of Scotland.

December 1: World AIDS Day—Since 1988 this day has been a time for remembering those who have died and for renewing our commitment to support those living with HIV throughout the world. The red ribbon, which began as a “grass roots” effort, has become an international symbol of AIDS awareness.

December 3: Mary Baker Eddy (1821 – 1910): Author of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* and Founder of the First Church of

Christ, Scientist in Boston. Also, the leading figure in the Christian Science movement. Mrs. Eddy said, “To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, today is big with blessings.”

December 4: St. Barbara (d. 306) – Barbara, a Greek pagan, embraced the Christian faith and dedicated herself to serving the Lord as a consecrated virgin. Her father tried to arrange marriages for her but she always refused. In time, Barbara ran away from her father but he found her (with the help of a shepherd who, as a result of his helping to capture Barbara, found his flocks, according to legend, turned to locusts) and locked her away. Still she would not marry nor renounce her newfound faith. Prayer gave her the strength to endure her trials. Finally, Barbara was condemned to death by beheading by her father. Her martyrdom took place on December 4th. Soon after, her father was struck by lightning.

December 6: St. Nicholas (270-343) – known for compassion, courage, and generosity. He is the patron of sailors, pawnbrokers, and children. When his parents died, he gave most of his inheritance to the poor. Because of various miracles attributed to his intercession, he is sometimes called Nicholas the Wonderworker. He was a bishop in Asia Minor during the time of the Roman Empire. His great deeds as told in legend include resurrecting three children who had been killed by a nefarious butcher who killed them and intended to cure them as ham, offering himself in exchange for the release of captives, and attending the first Council of Nicea (his name is included in some records but not in others).

December 8: Bodhi Day - commemorates the day that the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama (Shakyamuni), achieved awakening or enlightenment (bodhi in Sanskrit). Siddhartha had recently forsaken extreme ascetic practices and decided to sit under a tree and meditate until he found the root of suffering, and how to liberate oneself from it.

December 9: Blessed Juan Diego (16th century)—Witness to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary appeared, it is said, to Juan Diego with dark skin and Indian features, surrounded by symbols of Indian religion and culture. She spoke to him in his native Nahuatl, not Spanish. The message to the church was clear: it must not serve as the agent of colonial oppression, but be rooted in the experience of the people.

December 10: Thomas Merton (1915-1968)—Trappist monk. An American priest whose writings are among the greatest spiritual works of our time, Merton initially turned his back on the world by seeking solitude at the Abbey of Gethsemane in Kentucky. In time he came to understand a

deep solidarity with humanity and concern for issues of peace and justice. He also had a strong interest in Eastern spirituality, especially Zen Buddhism, from which he learned that the path to God is found in experience, not analysis.

December 12: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe – commemoration of St. Mary's visitation to Juan Diego

Sister Alicia Domon (d.1977)—French nun and martyr. During a period of military dictatorship in Argentina thousands of civilians were abducted and never heard from again, including several French nuns who had devoted themselves to working with the poor and oppressed. Sister Alicia became closely involved with the Mothers of the Disappeared, who dressed in black and gathered in silence in the central plaza each day, carrying pictures of their children. Along with several others, Alicia was abducted and tossed out of an airplane over the Atlantic Ocean.

December 13: F. Bernadette Turner (1903 – 1995) – Turner wanted to be an Episcopal priest when she was young, but was not allowed because of her gender. She still wanted to serve and help people, so she earned multiple degrees in Education, Sociology, Social Work, and finally a PhD in Psychology. She discovered Divine Science and trained to become a Divine Science minister. She pastored Divine Science churches in Chicago and Roanoke. In retirement, she continued to minister as a chaplain to the retirement home where she lived. Then, at the age of 86, she was ordained a deacon in the Episcopal Church and the following year (1990) at the age 87, she was ordained an Episcopal priest (her lifelong dream finally fulfilled). She continued serving as chaplain to her community where she encouraged seniors to renew their energy by taking rest, exercise, good nutrition, and meditation.

St. Lucy (283 – 304) - a Christian martyr who died during the Diocletianic Persecution. She is venerated as a saint by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Orthodox Churches. She is one of eight women along with St. Mary who are commemorated by name in the Canon of the Mass. Her feast day is celebrated in the West on 13 December. St. Lucia of Syracuse was honored in the Middle Ages and remained a well-known saint in early modern England.

December 14: Fannie Brooks James (1854 – 1914) – Nona Brooks' sister. Author of Truth and Health. A former Presbyterian, she struggled with health and financial issues in her younger years. Her lot improved once she was introduced to New Thought metaphysics. She was an early teacher,

writer, and leader in the Divine Science movement. Emphasizing the Divine Science focus on Omnipresence, she wrote, “If God is OMNIPRESENCE, there is nothing anywhere but God.”

December 15: Joseph Murphy (1898 – 1981) – an Irish Catholic priest, pharmacist, and psychologist who became a Religious Science minister and then a Divine Science minister. In his life he met Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein. He was a friend of Ernest Holmes and also of Emmet Fox. He loved the teachings of Nona Brooks. He pastored a large New Thought church in Los Angeles and wrote the self-help classic, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*. Murphy taught, “Your subconscious never sleeps. It is always on the job. It controls all your vital functions. Forgive yourself and everyone else before you go to sleep, and healing will take place much more rapidly.”

December 16: Joseph Perry Green (1898 – 1981) – founder of the College of Divine Metaphysics (still offering correspondence courses today).

December 17: Feast of St. Lazarus of Bethany – Lazarus was part of Jesus’ chosen family. Some Queer scholars think it is possible their relationship was romantic in nature.

Claude M. Bristol (1891 - 1951) - WW1 veteran and journalist who investigated and practiced what he called “mind stuff” (the power of belief, determination, and visualization). Comedienne Phyllis Diller credited his book *The Magic of Believing* with changing her life and jumpstarting her career. She often gave copies of the book to young performers seeking her advice. Bristol advised, “You have to think big to be big” and “We usually get what we anticipate.”

Dom Bede Griffiths (1906-1994)—Monk and Sannyasi. A student of C. S. Lewis at Oxford, Griffiths’ spiritual journey led him first to the Catholic faith and the life of a Benedictine monk. While sent to establish a monastery in India, he came to believe that the secularized West had much to learn from the East. He helped found a Christian ashram that was faithful to Christian traditions, but adopted the disciplines of the East, including yoga and meditation. He dressed in the saffron robes and lived as a sannyasi, or Hindu holy man. He believed he could find the truth of Christ present within all the religions of the world.

December 21: Apostle Thomas (d. 72) – there is a sayings gospel attributed to Thomas (*Gospel of Thomas*) which may be as old as the canonical *Gospel of Mark* (c. 70 CE). Thomas was the only apostle not in hiding

after Jesus' execution. When others claimed to have experienced a resurrected Jesus, Thomas doubted them and said he would have to experience it for himself. Thomas was also the only apostle who voiced support for Jesus' journey to visit Lazarus when he was ill. The other apostles were afraid the trip was dangerous, and Thomas said that as his disciples they should share in the danger and go with him. Thomas shows us that honest doubt can be part of profound faith.

December 23: Warren Felt Evans (1817 – 1889) – attended Middlebury and Dartmouth colleges. He became a Methodist minister and then left Methodism to join the Swedenborgian church (Church of the New Jerusalem). After visiting Phineas P. Quimby (the “father” of New Thought) for treatment for an ailment, Evans himself became a “mind cure” practitioner. He was the first to write about the healing methods used and taught by Phineas Quimby. WFE declared, “All outward power that we exercise over the things about us is but a shadow in comparison with the inward power that resides in imagination and will.”

Rabbi Abraham Heschel (1907-1972)—Teacher. A major force in Jewish spiritual renewal, Heschel came from a long line of Hasidic rabbis. After studying philosophy at Warsaw and Berlin he taught at several universities, eventually escaping to the United States from Nazi Germany. As a champion of interfaith dialogue, his writings exerted a tremendous influence on Christian thought. With a deep sense of prophetic justice, he sought to connect the mysticism of his Hasidic faith with the modern secular world.

Johnnie Coleman (1920 – 2014) – Johnnie Coleman experienced a dramatic healing when she discovered New Thought, but soon after encountered racism when she began studying for the ministry. Nevertheless, she completed her ministerial studies and was ordained. Later, she founded her own church (Christ Universal Temple), an association of churches and ministries (Universal Foundation for Better Living), and a ministry school. The theology of CUT & UFBL is “Fillmorean” (the philosophy of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore). Coleman taught the affirmation, “I am the thinker that thinks the thought that makes the thing.”

December 24: Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993) – Champion of positive thinking and author of *The Power of Positive Thinking* and founder of *Guideposts Magazine*, he was also the minister of New York's prestigious Marble Collegiate Church. Peale famously taught, “Change your thoughts and you change your world.” He praised enthusiasm: “There is real magic in enthusiasm. It spells the difference between mediocrity and accomplishment.” And he encouraged optimism: “Stand up to your ob-

stacles and do something about them. You will find they haven't half the strength you think they have."

December 25: Nativity of Jesus (c. 4 bce)—The celebration of Christmas at the darkest days of Winter marks the birth of light and hope for the world. The traditional date of Jesus' birth was determined in Rome in 336, taking the place of an existing Roman holiday, the birth of the Unconquerable Sun. The actual date Jesus was born was more likely in the Spring. The word "Christmas" goes back to the 12th century and is a contraction of "Christ's Mass."

Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary (circa 4 BCE – 29 CE) - is understood in a variety of ways. Historical criticism would point out that what we know of Jesus is at best second hand (and sometimes more removed than that), and that words attributed to him are never written in his own hand, but are written by people decades after his execution. His original followers saw him as a teacher and a healer. He was clearly a charismatic person who was able to draw crowds and impact people very deeply. Some people came to view him as the long awaited and hoped for messiah (a leader who would reestablish the independent Jewish state).

After his death, people glorified him all the more (as people do with slain heroes), and within a hundred years of his death some were remembering him as "God" in human flesh (similar to the Greek, Egyptian, and Roman gods of the time). In any case, he was someone who profoundly impacted human history and who continues to inspire people today. People experienced and remembered him as being somehow God-filled, though the explanations of the experiences vary widely.

From the evidence we have, it seems that Jesus' message was that all people are children of God and that the Realm of God is actually within the human spirit. He also seemed to believe that God was more concerned with people's character, motivation, and true desires than with their religiosity or conformity to tradition or even to scripture. His teachings helped people feel liberated in spite of political oppression and whole in spite of physical maladies. A word often used for this wholeness and liberation is "salvation."

Jesus was not opposed to reinterpreting old religious views to fit new realities and to include more people into the experience of God's love and grace. He believed the most important commandment was simply to love, and he taught the Golden Rule, which is to do unto others as you would have others do unto you. He scandalized people of his time by eating with people outside his social group, by being friendly with presumably cor-

rupt tax collectors as well as with prostitutes, by healing even the enemies of his people, and by intentionally reaching out to and speaking well of members of marginalized groups.

Heraclitus (circa 535 – 475 BCE) - known for his teaching that change is central to the universe, summarized by his statement, "You cannot step into the same river twice." He said that all things come to be in accordance with the Logos (that is, "word," or "reason"). Notice that Heraclitus lived half a millennium before Jesus, almost 600 years before the writer of the Gospel of John (who opens his Gospel with, "In the beginning was the Logos...[and] all things came to be through [the Logos], and without [the Logos] nothing came to be"). Logos philosophy was alive and well long before the Church applied it to Jesus.

Ammonius Saccas (mid-third century CE?) - believed that God is the only creator and that the ultimate reality of the universe is an infinite, unknowable, perfect ONE. It may have been Saccas who first used "Word" to define "Logos."

December 26: St. Stephen (5 - 34)—Deacon and martyr. Stephen is remembered as one of the first deacons chosen in the early Christian community in Jerusalem to aid the Apostles by caring for the sick and needy. Stephen's story is told in Acts 6-7.

E. Otis Charles (1926 – 2013) – Bishop of Utah in the Episcopal Church, Bishop in Charge for Navajoland, and after he retired from diocesan duties, became the President and Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School. In 1993 Bishop Charles "came out" as gay, reportedly the first bishop in a mainline denomination ever to do so.

December 27: St. John the Evangelist (6 – 100)—Apostle. John became, with Peter and James, one of the inner circle of Jesus' followers. Ancient icons picture him as the "Beloved Disciple" at the Last Supper with his head on Jesus' breast. Tradition holds that he took care of Mary after Jesus' death on the cross, and that he later settled at Ephesus in modern Turkey. It is John who reminds us over and over of Jesus' command for us to love one another.

December 29: King David & Jonathan – Rev. Kittredge Cherry has written, "The powerful love story of Jonathan and David in 1 and 2 Samuel suggests that same-sex couples are affirmed and blessed by God." Jonathan and David shared a special bond and a lifelong covenant. David affirmed he loved Jonathan in a way that he never loved a woman.

Daily Reflection & Prayer

November 1 – Say ah
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Ah!”

The Ah mantra, teachers from the East tell us, is a good way to start the day; however, it need not be used only in the morning. At midday, or even early evening, if we are feeling stressed or anxious, we can “start over” with “Ah.” Practitioners of mantra meditation suggest that we chant our mantra with intention, taking a deep inhalation, and then exhaling with the sound “Ah” for as long as we can sustain the sound. Three repetitions are recommended. A spiritual teacher once suggested doing the Ah mantra with a wish or goal in mind and letting the Ah sound be the prayer for the desired outcome. Such a simple mantra – anyone can do it. Try it today. Relax. Breathe in. Chant: ahhhhhhhh.

(inhale), *Ahhhhh*. (inhale), *Ahhhhh*. (inhale), *Ahhhhh*.

November 2 – Blessings from our ancestors
Rev. Dr. Anne Atwell

“I was born by myself but carry the spirit and blood of my father, mother, and my ancestors. So, I am really never alone. My identity is through that line.” Ziggy Marley

Today is All Soul’s Day, a time for us to remember our ancestors and how their living has impacted us. It is also a time to remember that death is not the end of the story but that we can be blessed by special memories. I remember the deep faith of my father, his trust in God, knowing that ultimately all will be well. I carry with me the lessons and the spirits of my grandparents and their parents. And I honor and remember those strong women upon whose shoulders I stand. Take some time today to consider your ancestors, both family and those dear to you, and how your life has been blessed by them.

Dear God, I am blessed by my ancestors and I feel their loving spirit today. Amen.

November 3 – Your heavenly will be done

Rev. Dr. Robert Griffin

Today, in America, it is Election Day. I do not believe that God “rigs” elections. However, I do believe in the power of prayer and I can think of no more fitting prayer for today than Jesus’ own (the Lord’s Prayer, The New Zealand Prayer Book):

“Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven - The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us; for you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.”

God, hear our prayer.

November 4 – Loving thoughts

Rev. Margarita Rodriguez

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Philippians 4.8

It has been a tough year for all humanity and when I ponder on it my heart fills with gratitude. Why? Because no matter whom I encounter in my journey, no matter what race, social status, nationality, I know we have common ground: we have shared an experience together. Today in the USA we are experiencing another event that impacts all US citizens, the results of an election. However we feel today, it will be helpful to take time in quietness and ponder on the advice in the letter to the Philippians. Can we show up as a loving presence for everyone we meet no matter what outcomes we see in the world?

May our loving thoughts be healing to our nation and our world.

November 5 – Good vibrations

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Om!”

Om is the cosmic sound of the universe. It represents universal energy which creates, preserves, and liberates. In the East, spiritual practitioners often begin and/or end their prayers and meditations with this sound. Some will chant the sound by itself as a mantra meditation. A teacher once suggested that at the end of day, spiritual practitioners ought to silently recount the blessings of the day and then with gratitude chant “Om.” Om is meant to help us feel connected to the universe and to experience higher, positive vibrations. It’s easy enough to do. Today, take a moment of stillness and quiet, and after a time of just “being” (or perhaps of recounting, with gratitude, the blessings of the day), simply chant the sacred sound: Om.

*Recognizing my unity with the Divine, and grateful for the many blessings I have known, I now recite the sacred sound:
Om. Om. Om.*

November 6 – Oneness

Rev. Dr. Nancy Davis

“It is apparent that a mind so split could never be the Teacher of Oneness...” A Course in Miracles (T-25.I.7:2)

The most basic teaching of Jesus is, “Love your enemies...” (Matt.5:44). Let’s be honest. Do we really want to love our neighbors, let alone our enemies? The Course asks, “In honesty, is it not harder for you to say ‘I love’ than ‘I hate’?” (T-13.III.1) Fortunately, A Course in Miracles teaches that the Holy Spirit, recognizes our desire to judge others, as a way to remain separate and special, but also understands we can be taught to remember our Oneness with others, as well as with God. Choosing the Holy Spirit as our Teacher, we recognize, “Only an illusion (of separation) stands between you and your brother/sister, and the holy Self you share together” (T-22.IV.7:8).

Holy Spirit, teacher of Oneness, may I learn to remember:

**“Father and Son and Holy Spirit are as One, as all my brothers and sisters join as one in truth” And so it is! (T-25.I.5:3)*

**gender neutral alternate phrasing: Creator and Christ and holy Spirit*

November 7 – God search

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“O God, you are my God, eagerly I seek you.” Psalm 63

Seeking for God is rather like a fish searching for water. We are in God. We are part of God. We breathe God. We are united with God. God is so much a part of us we sometimes fail to notice. We can't see our own cheek, but there it is, always. God is like that. When we seek after God, we are really seeking to remember our unity with God. We are seeking a deeper awareness of that Presence in which “we live and move and have our being.” This verse from Psalm 63 can be a mantra. Repeating a desire to experience God more deeply will surely lead to such an experience. May we discover and remember that we can never be separate from God.

O God, you ARE my God. I am in you, of you, filled with your love and light. Eagerly, I seek to be aware of and to express this glorious truth. Amen.

November 8 – Jesus mantra

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Dear Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.” The Jesus Prayer

This is an ancient Christian mantra, especially loved by those who practice Eastern forms of Christianity. To call a rural peasant from an occupied territory, who would be executed as a criminal, “Lord” is to affirm the sacred value of ALL people. To call Jesus the “Christ” is to recognize a divine anointing on his life. To call for mercy is to remind ourselves that Jesus, those who follow him, and indeed all people at their most human, are kind and compassionate. The Jesus prayer reminds us that all people are children of God, and all children of God are anointed to share kindness and compassion in the world. Let's pray this holy mantra today, this prayer of love and compassion.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me. Dear Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me. Dear Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me. Amen.

November 9 – Our divine light

Rev. Dr. Anne Atwell

“Our wounds are often the openings into the best and most beautiful part of us.” David Richo

So often when something difficult is happening in our lives, we want to keep it a secret. We may believe that others will think less of us if they realize that we are not immune to the challenges and struggles of daily living. The flaw in that is that no one is safe from difficult circumstances or trying times. When struggles occur, we can reach out to others to receive the support that will help to sustain us. We can pray or meditate to receive the love, goodness, and calm that the Divine offers us. And we can share our own woundedness with others so that they will know they're not alone. By sharing all of ourselves, our bright light will continue to shine.

Today I will let go of the shame of life's difficulties and I will share the Divine light that is fully and authentically me.

November 10 – Getting better daily

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better.”

Emile Coue

Coue was a French psychologist and pharmacist who developed a form of psychotherapy based on optimistic autosuggestion. Coue believed that we could direct our thinking and behavior by positive self-talk. An affirmation that he suggested for use was, “Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better.” What a perfect encouragement! Improvement is possible. Every day, I can be a little better than before. I can tell myself, in fact, that I am getting better all the time. Day by day – in EVERY way – I AM getting better and better. It feels good to say. It reminds us that the journey continues and we are moving forward. The technique generates hope. This is actually one of my favorite affirmations. I use it often, and I offer it to you today. Remind yourself throughout the day that you are getting better and better.

“Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better.”

November 11 – All shall be well

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

*“All shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner
of things shall be well.” Julian of Norwich*

It’s going to be okay. It’s going to work out. You’re stronger than you think. You deserve the best. Hold on. We’ve heard these encouragements. Are they empty promises? Are they naïve? Do they offer false hope? Or, are they expressing a deep and profound truth – that the truest part of us is always safe, we are forever loved, and the future has infinite possibilities? The moment may be seemingly disastrous, but Resurrection follows Golgotha. Ultimately, we will be okay. We are brilliant, loving, beautiful, whole, and deserving of joy. We live in an abundant universe and nothing can separate us from the Love that God is. From this perspective, all is well. Let’s declare these optimistic words over and over, and know them to be absolutely true.

*All shall be well, all shall be well, and all
manner of things shall be well. Amen.*

November 12 – Alleluia

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Alleluia!”

In a previous reflection I shared about using the sound “Ah” as a mantra. You’ll notice that sound is part of the word “Alleluia.” We can repeat “Alleluia” over and over as a mantra, experiencing the vibration of “ah” while, as with all mantras, moving past discursive thinking into simply being blissfully present. Finally, “alleluia” is praise. It means “praise the Lord” or “praise be to God.” And we know that when we praise, we are raised. So, while Alleluia! can be an exclamation of joy or approval, it can also be a mantra and it can be an act of praise for That which we consider divine. Alleluia, then, can be part of our prayers, or Alleluia can be a prayer in itself.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

(Can be sung to the tune of the Eightfold Alleluia)

November 13 – Omnipresence

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“There’s not a spot where God is not.” New Thought aphorism

When I was a child, I understood God to be far away, but still aware of me, especially when I broke a rule. God, as I understood God, was prone to anger, judgmental, and only tolerated me at all because of the execution of Jesus (but I somehow had to accept that story as told to me or I wouldn’t reap the benefits of it). Distant – Angry – Inflexible – Requiring human sacrifice – Requiring further that I accept this narrative without question or doubt...that was the God of my childhood. If this God was “good”...what would be terrible?!

The God of my adult experience and understanding is Love, Wisdom, Joy, Hope, Beauty, Possibility, Life, Peace; this God that is All Good and only Good is also omnipresent – everywhere fully present. A presence of Love that will never and can never let us go...that is how I now know God. The God that is omnipresent Love is a great comfort, a source of healing and empowerment, and not only doesn’t cause fear but is actually the cure for fear.

There’s not a spot where God, All Good, is not. Alleluia!

November 14 – Recognize, realize, resolve, rejoice, & release

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“God is. I Am. It’s all good. Hot damn! Peace out.”

– A sample prayer from a Samaritan Institute course on prayer

Recognize a higher Power: God is.

Realize that you are part of this divine Life: I Am.

Resolve (declare, decide): Because I am part of a universal and eternal Life, all is well – It’s all good.

Rejoice: If God is and I am part of God and ultimately, all is well, then I have every reason to celebrate – Hot damn!

Release: Let go and let God – Peace out.

There are many ways to pray, but a powerful formula is to Recognize, Realize, Resolve, Rejoice, and Release.

God is. I Am. It’s all good. Hot damn! Peace out.

November 15 – Praise to the jewel in the lotus

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Om mani padme hum.” Buddhist mantra

The mantra om mani padme hum can be translated, “Praise to the jewel in the lotus.” For some, the mantra might symbolize hope. A lotus thrives in muddy water. Even in murky conditions, the flower can be beautiful, and to think that something of great value might be hidden within the beautiful flower suggests to us that even when circumstances are messy, we can thrive and within us is a divine spark that no condition can extinguish. This particular mantra is associated with devotion to the bodhisattva of compassion, so it might be chanted when we wish someone comfort or when we ourselves need comfort. Mantras get us into a state of calm. Mantras raise our vibration, brush away distractions, help us to be still for a few blessed moments. Try chanting today:

Om mani padme hum.

November 16 – Passion

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“Nothing great in the world was accomplished without passion.”

Georg Hegel

I had a great job and was successful in my chosen career; I started as an hourly employee and retired as an executive with just three positions between me and the president of our organization. I told everyone that I would be retiring from that job the day I was eligible to do so; they didn't believe me until the day I left. Why leave? No passion for the job; competence does not equal passion and I was determined to find that which fed my soul. Leaving my job and pursuing my dream is the best thing that I have ever done and I encourage you to find the thing that makes you glad to be alive, that special thing that ignites your passion and feeds your soul. Plan for what you want, and begin your journey to something great.

Dear God, you want the best for us and we're determined to find our passion and do something great in our world. Amen.

November 17 – Shakyamuni mantra

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Om muni muni mahamuni Shakyamuni svaha.”

Buddha Shakyamuni mantra

“Great wise one of the Shakyans, hail!” is how this mantra can be translated. But, mantras aren’t so much about what they “mean.” Mantras are an experience that liberates us from chasing mental rabbits and allows us to simply be present in a moment. This mantra can be a tribute to one of the great holy teachers of human history, and/or it can be an expressed wish to become enlightened as he was. It can also simply be a way to get still and experience a moment of freedom.

Om muni muni mahamuni Shakyamuni svaha.

November 18 – Journey to enlightenment

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi svaha.”

Mantra of the Heart Sutra

The Heart Sutra affirms the Buddhist belief in “emptiness”, that is, that the world of phenomenon is changing. What endures is the *process* of life. The text tells us: “Form does not differ from Emptiness, Emptiness does not differ from Form; whatever is Empty, that is Form, whatever is Form that is Empty. The same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness.” The text encourages detaching from outcomes, to not cling to desires, and to know that everything, desirable and undesirable, will come and go and we are part of the Absolute, Eternal No-Thing that expresses as everything. This, the claim is made, is the wisdom that ends suffering. The text concludes with a mantra: *Gate* (got-ay), *gate*, *paragate*, *parasamgate*, *bodhi svaha*. It means “go all the way to enlightenment!” But mantras usually aren’t used for their literal meanings. Mantras are used for the peace they instill, the energy they summon, and for helping one be fully present.

I remain committed to my journey toward enlightenment. Svaha.

November 19 - Peace is possible

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Nam myoho rengo kyo.” Nichiren Buddhist mantra

Devotion to the mystic law of the Lotus Sutra, that’s what *nam myoho rengo kyo* means. Those who chant it often believe that the phrase itself contains all the energy, wisdom, and benefits of the Lotus Sutra (scriptures containing the teachings of the Buddha). The primary benefit of a mantra is the inner peace it brings. Anxieties and sorrow can be replaced, at least temporarily, with peace. Some believe that chanting this mantra will help wishes come true, but isn’t our primary wish usually simply to have peace and joy? Spiritual reflection, meditation, contemplation, and prayer can bring us fulfillment that “things” cannot offer (and that nothing can take away). When in turmoil, try chanting your way back to peace.

Nam myoho rengo kyo! I am devoted to the path of peace and joy.

November 20 – Rhyme and rhythm

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Divine Mother, mother divine, show me the way, give me a sign.”

Wiccan chant

Wicca gained traction in the mid-20th century and became popular in Europe and the U.S. Wicca honors and cares for nature, includes feminine imagery for the divine, and borrows from the traditions and myths of ancient northern European, Celtic, Mediterranean, and sometimes Northern African religions and cults. One of the practices of Wicca is spellcasting (wishing, praying, visualizing, performing rituals) and one of the techniques sometimes used is to employ rhythm and rhyme. The chant above is a simple prayer for divine guidance that uses feminine imagery, rhythm, and rhyme. This can generate energy and increase confidence in the prayer. Try a little rhyme and rhythm sometime and see how they “boost” your prayers.

There’s nothing to fear, no need to take flight;

I am at peace and my light is most bright.

November 21 – Beloved by God

Rev. Marian Cavagnaro

"Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is true self. Every other identity is illusion." Brennan Manning

It is the 325th day of the year in the Gregorian calendar, 40 days remain until the end of the year. The number 40 comes up many times in the bible, often designating a time of radical transition or transformation. There was Noah, self-isolating with his family in an ark for 40 days and nights during the Flood. There were the Israelites, wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. There was Jesus, fasting 40 days and nights in the desert. During their days and years they reflected and prayed. During times of life transitions when we experience change and challenges, and during times of spiritual transformation on our path to the sacred, may we have no false ideas or beliefs. May we see more clearly who and whose we are.

*I am a beloved child of God. That is my truth. That is my identity.
Amen.*

November 22 – Quiet time

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46

When we still our minds and enter into sacred silence, that's when we sense the divine presence. In the stillness is when we realize and remember that we are part of God. The drop isn't the whole wave, but what the wave is in macro, the drop is in micro. The wave isn't the whole ocean, but the wave is part of the ocean, one with the ocean, made of what the ocean is. A branch isn't the entire tree, but it is part of the tree and is made from what the tree is. In stillness, in communion (comm-union, union with) our Source, we experience the divine Reality as being One, Whole, Perfect, Omnipresent...the One expresses as many. I am not all of God, but all that God is, exists within me. God is all there is, and so I am an experience, an expression, an incarnation of the One. And so are you. And so is everything. Be still. Get quiet. Realize. Remember. The One is ALL.

November 23 – Novel truth

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“When lies have been accepted for some time, the truth always astounds with an air of novelty.” Clement of Alexandria

In America, we just completed an election cycle that for many of us was way too long. Throughout the cycle, we heard promise after promise from the candidates and many of those promises would be impossible to fulfill even in utopia. Yet, day after day they hammered their promises with an air of certainty that belied the truth and after a while, we found ourselves hoping that the lies could be true. They're not. That simple statement brings us back to earth and forces us to confront the reality of our world and find real, workable solutions to the problems we face. What's great about this is that when we face the truth of a situation, we find that we can overcome the lies and fix the problem.

Loving God, you know the truth in all things and we work to find that truth as we overcome all obstacles placed in our way. Amen.

November 24 – God is here

Rev. Dr. Anne Atwell

“People on the margins, who are less able to and less invested in keeping up appearances, often have an uncanny ability to name things as they are. Standing with them can help situate us in the truth and helps keep us honest.” Pat Farrell, OSF

The realm of God is not a location or even a specific emotion. The realm of God is experienced when we reach out to those in need. The realm of God is experienced when we make time to share in another's difficult journey or when we find ways to create justice. But let us not be overconfident by the good we do. Let us search for those who are still missing from the common table, those who are marginalized, and those who have been set aside. It is in their being that we will experience the true presence of the Divine.

Today I will honor the Divine Spirit that is with and within all people. May it be so!

November 25 – Nothing is lacking

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Nothing is lacking to those who have God.” Psalm 34

Think about this for a moment: You already have it all, because God is all, which means God includes you, and all that God is, is part of you. A theology of omnipresence means that God is everywhere fully and equally present. If God is everywhere present, then God is the only presence, and if God is the one presence, then everything that is must be in and part of that presence. We cannot be separated from God, so we cannot be separated from goodness. Not every moment or event will be satisfying to our ego-selves, but our True Self (and we are all expressions of the One True Self) has everything and can do everything because It is everything. In Reality, we lack nothing because we are part of That which is All.

I lack nothing because I have God. Alleluia!

November 26 – God in you

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Be examples... wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.”

George Fox

Quaker George Fox dictated this sentence while in jail. His phrase “that of God in everyone” is well known. Quakerism started as pacifistic evangelical movement. The Quaker idea that there was an inner light that each person could personally access would have been quite a liberal idea at the time. The light wasn’t necessarily believed to be innate, but rather, invited in; however, Quakerism evolved and began to include universalist sensibilities in many of its adherents. Today, many saying “that of God in everyone” do take it to mean that there is a divine light which is innate, present within us always, and so we don’t invite it in as much as we discover it within. I believe there is “that of God” in you, and *I ask God in you today to give you the blessings you need most. Amen.*

November 27 – Dream big!

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Lord, thank you for great goals! Let them be my uplifting aims; but, never let my targets become ceilings! Amen.” Robert Schuller

I’ve often shared with parish leadership that achieving 80% of a BIG goal is more satisfying than achieving 100% of a mediocre goal. I believe it was RuPaul who said, “Shoot for the moon; even if you miss, you’ll land among the stars.” Fear thinking sabotages us. Pessimism robs our joy. Scarcity thinking limits us as much or more as any condition or situation could. Aim big! Maybe you reach the goal, maybe you don’t, but you’ll achieve so much more than if you had no goal or a goal that was far too small. And, sometimes, we actually reach the big goals...and then it’s time for new ones!

I dare to dream big.

November 28 – Hail!

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Hail! Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb...”

The Archangel Gabriel to St. Mary

Gabriel’s greeting to Mary in Luke’s gospel is when Mary learns she is pregnant and her child is destined to be special. That greeting also makes up the first part of the ancient “Hail Mary”, a prayer of devotion and supplication to the Blessed Mother: “Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.” The prayer downplays Jesus’ humanity, and it ignores (or denies) our innate human goodness. I don’t identify as a sinner (I’ve screwed up, but I’m not a screw up). God is all, so Jesus and Mary are divine, but so are we. So, to make the prayer reflect what I mean when I pray, my modified version is as follows:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, pray for us. Amen.

November 29 – Divine light

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“God is my light and my salvation...” Psalm 27

This phrase makes an excellent mantra. I like getting in a comfortable position, eyes closed (or mostly closed creating a “hazy” effect) and then audibly but softly repeating: God is my light and my salvation. God is my light and my salvation. God is my light and my salvation...

“Light” reminds me that God is energy, power, presence, more the “shining” than “something” that shines. It reminds me of God’s nearness, God’s ubiquity, God’s beautiful, warm, guiding presence in (and as) my life. And if God is light, then I am safe. I am always in the light. The light is forever showing me possibilities. The light that liberates, leads, and heals is forever shining. God is my light and my salvation. Simply saying the words fills me with assurance and peace.

God is my light and my salvation. God is my light and my salvation.

I give thanks for the truth that God is my light and my salvation.

And so it is.

November 30 – Style over substance

Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“Don’t worry about being effective. Just concentrate on being faithful to the truth.” Dorothy Day

Style over substance. Perhaps in the past you’ve heard this phrase and wondered what it might mean. I think Dorothy Day’s comment flips the comment on its head. She tells us we need not worry about how we approach a situation – style – but if we pay attention to that which is true – substance – we’ll be okay. When we pay too much attention to how something may look to the outside world, we can lose sight of what is really important, how what we do affects both our world and the outside world. Do what you know to be right, ignore the temptation to put pretty bows on difficult tasks and you’ll find an inner peace that will help you through the roughest of times.

Loving God, your style is to bring truth to the substance of our world. May we find peace in that truth and strive to be faithful to your style. Amen.

December 1 – Angels
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here, ever this day be at my side to light and guard and rule and guide.” Traditional guardian angel prayer

Are there orders of angels in realms beyond? Did they evolve from lower life experiences? Are they energy beings (aren’t we all)? Are they products of human imagination? Are they noble souls that have embraced a higher task? Are they symbols for all the daily occurrences that comfort and encourage us: Smells, song lyrics, memories, cloud formations, pets, a well-timed text from a dear friend? Perhaps angels are any person, thing, or event that delivers the message that God is omnipresent and everlasting love. I’m not sure I need to know exactly what angels are in order to benefit from the good they represent. Whatever they are, I am grateful for the ministry of angels.

May angels lead us today in paths of joy, peace, and well-being.

December 2 – Living together in peace
Deacon Dr. Sue Gallagher

“In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace.”

(Excerpt from A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, February 2019)

Pope Francis met with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi where they declared the above statement (Papal Encyclical Letter, Fratelli Tutti) to invite us to love others who are not in close proximity. Feeling our sense of connection to all human beings, to the earth and to all forms of life can guide our attitudes and actions of goodness, love and peace. Peace arises from knowing that our destinies are immutably interwoven and that to care for the other is to care for self.

Lord, may we live in peace, a peace that arises from knowing we are all intimately connected. May it be so.

December 3 – Praise
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Thou art my life; thou art my love. Thou art the sweetness which I do seek.” Paramahansa Yogananda

Prayers of praise are very empowering. When we praise, we are focused on what is good rather than on what we find troubling. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Whatever is good... think on these things.” When we focus on what is good we are more likely to feel good, and when we feel good we are more likely to experience what is good. It’s fine to wish for things to improve or to hope for success or to pray for some trouble to quickly pass, but let’s also remember to offer prayers of praise. When we praise, we are raised. And anyway, when we consider the grand mystery, the infinite truth, the power and presence that is without limit or end, that which we call “God”, praise is a natural response.

*“Thou are my life; thou art my love.
Thou art the sweetness which I do seek.” Amen.*

December 4 – Positive focus
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I give praise to the universe. I give praise to mother earth. I give praise to all of nature and its beings. I give praise to all my guiding spirits. I give praise to my ancestors. I give praise to all that came before me in this struggle. I give praise to my elders. I give praise to all those who have cared for me, protected me, guided me and loved me.” Francisca Porchas

It is empowering to acknowledge blessings and helpers and acts of kindness and moments of joy. Focus influences the direction we take in life, and so when we focus on what is good, we tend to move in the direction of our good. Also, when we express gratitude for blessings, that gratitude energetically signals the Source of blessings that we are ready to receive even more.

I give praise to the Source of all good. I am thankful for my many blessings. Alleluia! Amen.

December 5 – Sigh of relief

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Thank God!”

a common exclamation upon receiving good news

Our loved one’s surgery was successful: Thank God!

Negotiations have concluded and there will be no strike: Thank God!

The grades are out and you passed everything: Thank God!

The holiday bonus is larger than expected: Thank God!

The plane landed safely: Thank God!

Our frequent sigh of relief is, “Thank God!” It suggests we know that we are connected to Something grand and meaningful and compassionate. It suggests a need to offer praise for beautiful blessings. It suggests that we somehow intuit that we aren’t really alone. Of course, sometimes the news isn’t good, but that we survived the pain of those moments may deserve a “thank God,” too. With our thoughts, our feelings, our choices, our actions...we really do “pray without ceasing” and one of our most significant prayers may be the simple two-word phrase: *Thank God!*

December 6 – A beautiful blessing

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“May you be filled with loving-kindness; may you be well. May you be peaceful and at ease, and may you be happy.” Buddhist prayer

If we are love-filled, we will be kind, compassionate, generous... our world is in need of those gifts. If we feel well in body and emotions, then we aren’t overly burdened by fears. If we have peace within, then we are calm, poised and focused and we can achieve great things, and more importantly, we won’t spin out of control when difficulties arise. And if we are happy, we will have no reason to wish unhappiness on anyone. This simple blessing, which we can offer for ourselves, our loved ones, casual acquaintances, strangers, and even perceived enemies, is really an expressed desire for the highest and best to be experienced. I think it is the perfect blessing, and I offer it for you today:

May you be filled with loving-kindness; may you be well.

May you be peaceful and at ease, and may you be happy. Svaha.

December 7 – Peace in action

Rev. Dr. Anne Atwell

“Peace is not an absence of activity, but a very vital, vibrant quality of joyous serenity, where everything is in harmonious relationship.” Ernest Holmes

So much of the Christmas message is about peace. We hear of peace on earth and the peace that Jesus brings. But what about us? Is it possible that we can bring peace to this hurting world? Peace begins with each of us accepting others for who they are – as children of a loving and grace-filled God. Our words and our actions demonstrate to others the kind of person we truly are. We are called to be a person of peace and of love; let us strive to live that message every day.

Today, though my words and actions, I will demonstrate a peaceful existence. I will be mindful of the unconditional Divine love offered to all. May it be so!

December 8 – Good wishes

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“May your pockets be heavy and your heart be light; may good luck pursue you each morning and night.” Irish blessing

Does it really do any good to wish someone well? I believe it does. Obviously, empty words void of intention won't be very helpful (though, even as a gesture of kindness they may have value), but when our wish is sincere, filled with genuine hope and goodwill, it is actually a demand on the universe. It is energy focused. Intentional, loving wishes are attempts to plug into the power of Life Itself. Wish happiness and well-being for your loved ones. Wish recovery and strength for those who are ill. Wish for peace in the world. Wish for people who struggle to find their way. A good wish is never wasted. It tells people you care, and it may even unleash mighty powers that can achieve wonderful things.

*I wish to be happy and well, and what I wish for myself,
I wish for all people. And so it is.*

December 9 – Rejoice
Rev. Margarita Rodriguez

*“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices
in God my Savior...” Luke 1.47*

Advent is a time of expectation; this year we yearn for closeness to our families and friends. As we ready ourselves for the celebrations, is our soul ready to glorify and rejoice in the Spirit of Love? I invite us to yearn for the closeness of the Divine, to develop the kind of closeness where we become the brush of the painter, the ink of the writer, the musician’s instrument. A Course in Miracles invites us in lesson 75 to “Dwell not upon the past today. Keep a completely open mind, washed of all the past ideas and clean of every concept you have made.” When we allow the Divine to simply be, it is in this holy instant we can rejoice like Mary and allow only love to express through us, it is when the beloved and the Beloved become one.

Today let us rejoice as we allow Spirit to express through us!

December 10 – Who is God?
Rev. Kevin Tisdol

*“Our idea of God tells us more about ourselves
than about [God].” Thomas Merton*

We get the God we see in ourselves. If we are petty and vengeful, our God is most likely the same, justifying our spiteful ways. Here’s an idea, during this holiday season when so many religions are celebrating wonderful events, let’s begin to see God in a different light. Let’s see God as a loving parent who only wants the best for us. If we can do this, we can begin to make the internal changes that we need to do to be able to see the world and God’s creation in a more positive light. As we begin to see God as love, we’ll be able to see more love in our world. After all, ‘tis the season!

Dear God, you are love and we revel in that love. We see your love and are motivated to share that love throughout this holiday season and all through the coming year. And so it is.

December 11 - Peace
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“May peace prevail on earth.” Masahisa Goi

Masahisa Goi started a global prayer movement for peace in 1955. He “received” the words “May peace prevail on earth” and that is the prayer upon which he built the movement. That prayer, in many languages, is found on Peace Poles all over the world. Goi wrote books, lectured, and is believed to have achieved enlightenment. People said his smile was healing, his presence was comforting, and though small in stature, his essence seemed to fill a room. He spent the last years of his life in almost perpetual prayer. A commitment to peace and to praying for peace apparently transformed his life, and his life blessed many others. While his earthly life lasted from 1916 to 1980, his prayer is prayed weekly at Sunshine Cathedral and daily, even hourly throughout the world to this day. Let us continue to pray and work for peace, and may our work and prayer lead to blessed transformation.

May peace prevail on earth!

December 12 – Two teachers
Rev. Dr. Nancy Davis

“Christ’s eyes... will look upon whatever you see with love...”
ACIM (T-12.VI.4:2-5)

Do you look upon whatever you see with love? I know I don’t. This is why my practice is to ask for the Holy Spirit’s perspective, whenever I feel upset or judgmental. A Course in Miracles teaches that we have two teachers or perspectives to choose between. Our wrong-minded ego always teaches us to judge others. The Holy Spirit always teaches us how to see with Christ’s vision. “The Holy Spirit is perfectly aware that you do not know yourself (or others), and perfectly aware of how to teach you to remember what you (and others) are. Because He loves you...” (T-12.VI.2:2-3). When we ask for the Holy Spirit’s guidance, our perception changes. “You perceive more and more common elements in all situations... Gradually you learn to apply it (love) to everyone and everything, for its applicability is universal...Every child of God is one in Christ” (T-12.VI.6:1,5-6).

Holy Spirit teach me Christ’s vision today!

December 13 – Just love
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“God is love.” 1 John 4.8

“Love is patient and kind...Love never ends...” 1 Corinthians 13.4, 7-8

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”
Galatians 5.22-23

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...[and] you shall love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these.” Mark 12.30-31

Love. Love is our creed. Love is our ethic. Love is our guide. Love is divine, gracious, endless, patient and kind, gentle, and is the primary religious directive. Love. Just love. God is love, and we are experiencing and expressing God when we are loving. Good religion is so simple – just love.

*Dear God, in your many names, I will love more. I will love myself.
I will love others. I will love your world. I will know you as love.
Amen.*

December 14 – Gifts
Rev. Kevin Tisdol

“God has graced every tradition with insight into the divine mystery, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated – each has a gift to bring to the world.” Dom Bede Griffiths

I would venture to guess that every society, past and present, has a faith tradition. Part of those traditions is to acknowledge that the vastness of our world comes from something that we cannot fully understand. How and what we call the creator of all that we see varies, and when we listen to the sacred stories of these traditions, we feel a connection that helps us realize that we are not as different as we may have once thought. Listen to someone who does not follow your faith tradition and share your experiences and you'll see that we are all truly connected to the divine. And that's the divine's gift to us.

Oh loving Creator, we give you thanks for the richness of our experiences and look forward to learning more about your universe from the gifts of our neighbors, both near and far. Amen.

December 15 – God is here

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“God didn’t come from anywhere; God is everywhere. And God is you. You didn’t come from anywhere. You are here, or, perhaps more accurately, here is you.” Rabbi Rami Shapiro

Rabbi Shapiro is a lifelong student and teacher of spirituality. He holds degrees in philosophy and religion and studied with private mentors from Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jewish traditions (including Mordecai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism and Sherwin Wine, a founding figure of Humanistic Judaism). Shapiro blends the wisdom of multiple spiritual paths into a holistic approach to faith. Rabbi Shapiro, one of the great spiritual teachers of our time, reminds us of God’s eternal omnipresence: no beginning, no ending, all-presence. Nothing happens outside of God. All that is, is an expression of God. We are each part of God because God is all that is or can be. What a great comfort to know that we cannot be separated from our Source. God is here. Here is us.

God is here. Here is me. I rejoice!

December 16 – Divine life is all-inclusive

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Life is broad and deep enough to include all.” J. Sig Paulson

Everything that lives, is (obviously) part of Life. The single cell organism is an expression of life. A fungus, even a virus, also are expressions of life. A blade of grass, an insect, a reptile, a cat, a puppy, a fish...each an example of Life showing up and doing its thing. And people, of course...so many people! Life is ubiquitous, forever, and all-inclusive. Now, dare to think of Life as divine. Think of Life, Love, Wisdom, Power, and Presence all being synonyms for “God.” Life includes all. God includes all. There’s not a spot where God is not, and there isn’t a soul that isn’t part of God. The Source of life is in all life, and all of life is taking place within the Source. God is broad and deep enough to include all.

*The Love that God is, is all-inclusive and never-ending.
This is my comfort, my hope, and my joy. And so it is.*

December 17 – Oneness

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The Self of everyone...the transcendental field of reality of everyone, is the same in everyone.” Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

We are one. That is to say, we are each expressions of the One Reality. There is one Life, one Power, one Presence, one Principle, one Source, one Field of possibilities and we are EACH a part of It, an expression of It, a manifestation of It. We are one. We are one with the One. We are God expressing. We are how the Universe knows Itself. We are Love in action. We are the creation that God calls Good, because we are Infinite Good having a temporal, physical experience. Never doubt that God loves you; God IS you. All is well.

One with God, I Am happy, whole, peaceful, and abundantly blessed. And so it is that I rejoice! Amen.

December 18 – Love is the path

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“When your enemy falls, do not rejoice. When your enemy stumbles, do not be glad...One who rejoices at another's hurt is an enemy of all.” Samuel the Younger

I was shocked recently when someone asked if I rejoiced when an unpleasant person became briefly ill. What?! Of course not! I can disagree with someone, even find them difficult to like, without ever wishing them ill or celebrating when they suffer. We won't approve of or enjoy every personality or every person's behavior, but we can be bigger than to wish suffering on them. And when anyone suffers, our humanity demands that we wish for their suffering to be relieved. Remember...our spiritual path isn't about dogma or tradition. Our path is about embracing, embodying, and sharing LOVE.

May all beings be safe and well. Amen.

December 19 – Unanswered questions

Rev. Dr. Robert Griffin

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” Luke 2.46

There are times we ask questions and we don't like the response that we receive. There are times that we are so fixated on getting the answer that we lose sight of where we were going with the question. I have learned that it is ok just to sit with the question and allow whatever comes up to rest with me before rushing to find the correct answer. I've also discovered that it is also ok to just ask the question without looking for an answer. Maybe this is a season of questions. Even if we don't know the answers we can trust that what we need will come when we need it.

*I ask my questions and I know all will come
to me as and when I need it.*

December 20 – Love yourself

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

"The biggest embrace of love you'll ever make is to embrace yourself completely. Then you'll realize you've just embraced the whole universe, and everything and everybody in it." Adyashanti

I am star dust. I am an echo of the Big Bang. I am water. I am earth. I am interconnected with trees, clouds, and rocks. I am light. I am part of my environment. I am part of a universal web of existence. I am eternity experiencing time. I am how the universe knows itself. I am God's clay molded by God's creativity and enlivened with God's Breath. And what I've just affirmed is also true for you and for every creature that has ever existed. As I learn to appreciate, value, and celebrate myself, I am blessing every child of God, which is every single being that exists. I am one with all that is, so as I learn to love myself, I am learning to love all that is.

May I love myself and thereby love the whole world. Amen.

December 21 – Solstice
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Snowflakes swirl down gently in the deep blue haze beyond the window. The outside world is a dream. Inside, the fireplace is brightly lit, and the Yule log crackles with orange and crimson sparks. There’s a steaming mug in your hands, warming your fingers. There’s a friend seated across from you in the cozy chair, warming your heart. There is mystery unfolding.” Vera Nazarian

I have experienced winter in New England, the Jersey shore, New York City, Western Maryland, and the Ozark mountains. The smell of crackling logs burning, the joy of a hot cup of tea, the comfortable cocoon of blankets enfolding me in a chilly room... these are sweet memories. For many years now, I have lived in a tropical environment. No snow. Ever. My house has no heat (nor need for it). But sand is nice. And beautiful palm trees. Tea tastes good even if the hot cup isn't needed to warm cold hands. The Winter Solstice can be a day of blessings. Snow or sand, warm or cold, palm trees or firs, “this is the day our God has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

December 22 – This is love
Rev. Dr. Anne Atwell

“And this is love. All that ever was and will be...”
Mary Chapin Carpenter

As the Christmas holiday grows closer, the sense of love feels considerably more present to me. Yet at the same time, I recognize that for some, the holidays bring feelings of loss, grief, and sorrow. Though it all, we can remember that we are preparing to commemorate the birth who brings Divine love to earth; one who welcomes the marginalized; one who teaches and acts with compassion. That may not ease all the difficulties and still there can be a glimmer of light that appears when hope is born to us and to the world. Hold that close to you when the holidays seem overwhelming and know that Divine peace is always available to you.

*Holy God, embrace me with your unconditional love and open my eyes to the hope and peace that are preparing to break forth.
May I recognize this in my life. Amen.*

December 23 – Christ’s rebirth

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Christ is born in the cradle of each loving heart. So you must prepare your consciousness to receive him. Instead of enjoying just the material aspects of this Christmas celebration, make your heart a cradle where Christ can be born again.”

Paramahansa Yogananda

Yogananda thought primitive Christianity was completely harmonious with the teachings of Kriya Yoga, and he believed Jesus’ intimacy with God was the achievable goal of every spiritual seeker. He wrote about Jesus, sometimes prayed to Jesus, and gave his own interpretations of the Gospel message. Once, at his California ashram, Yogananda had a mystical encounter with Jesus. Jesus, bathed in light, came into his room and communicated with him silently with his piercing eyes, filling Yogananda with peaceful understanding. Basically, Christ was born in Yogananda, and can be in each of us. This holiday season can be “merry and bright” and it can also be profound and lifechanging. Let the angels sing as Christ is reborn in us during this holy season.

I allow Christ to be reborn in me. Alleluia.

December 24 – The meaning of the virgin birth
*from Resurrecting Jesus: Embodying the Spirit of a
Revolutionary Mystic by Adyashanti*

“In the Jesus story...Jesus represents eternal being, that dimension of our own being that is beyond time and space...This is eternal, divine being breaking through the latticework of time – breaking through the structures of our minds, breaking through our belief systems and entering into our consciousness...So there you are, a human being filled with the mystery of eternal being, filled with the radiance of spirit. This is what the virgin birth signifies: time and space being opened up and eternity being embodied as a human being. This is you and I, yet we don’t know it. We are eternal, divine beings manifested here and now in our humanity...Your [parents]...produced a baby, a beautiful, incarnated being, and that being is filled and animated by the vitality of divine being. That is the beauty of what the virgin birth signifies if you can read the metaphor.”

December 25 – Home for the holidays

From a blog post by Thich Nhat Hanh

“Jesus, as soon as he was born, had to be on the run right away and to be a refugee, a runaway without a home. When he grew up and became a young man, it was the same; he was still a wanderer with no real home to return to...

Siddhartha, as an adult, found himself in a similar situation. He was born into a royal family that was wealthy and privileged...But still... he did not feel at home. He was not at peace. Therefore, one day, he decided to leave...in search of his true home, in search of inner peace...

In the end, Jesus found his true home in his heart. He found the light in his heart. He taught his disciples that they too have their own light and he taught them to bring that light out for others to see.

Siddhartha taught that one’s true home can be found in the present moment. He developed practices for his disciples so that they too could find their true home. He taught that we each have an island within...In the island of our true self, we can find peace and fulfillment...

Remember that your ‘True Home’ is not found outside yourself, but it is right in your own heart...We have everything we need right in our heart...”

December 26 – Miracles of love

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“Good King Wenceslas looked out on the Feast of Stephen...”

Traditional holiday carol

Wenceslas was a German duke who seems to have been in love with his male servant, Podevin. The famous carol about Wenceslas refers to a story of him (with Podevin) going out to give gifts to the needy on the day after Christmas (the feast day of St. Steven). Podevin was barefoot and cold, and the duke told him to walk in his footprints. Podevin did, and miraculously, his feet were warmed. The next time you sing the beloved carol, remember it is about a generous gay man whose love kept his companion warm “on the feast of Steven.”

I give thanks for miracles of love. Amen.

December 27 – Love is love
(Feast Day of St. John)
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“O glorious Apostle, who...wast so beloved by Jesus as to deserve to...be left, in his place, as son to his most holy Mother...may [I] be made worthy to be ever united to Jesus as a faithful disciple, and to Mary as a devoted child... Amen.” Prayer to St. John

Some scholars think John was the “beloved disciple” (others think it might have been Lazarus), and many believe that the beloved disciple was in fact a romantic companion of the Lord. The beloved disciple then becomes for us a model of love that transcends death and hardship. Love is love, and it is powerful and sacred.

I give thanks for the power of love. Amen.

December 28 – Begin and become
Rev. Marian Cavagnaro

"We do not want to be beginners. But let us be convinced of the fact that we will never be anything else but beginners, all our life!"

Thomas Merton

In a few days we will see the year 2020 come to an end, and what a year it has been! We may have had to leave our comfort zone and to be a beginner at a different job or take on a different responsibility. To be a beginner is to be a learner. We can challenge ourselves with new goals. We can risk and whether we win or lose we can learn something new. We can experience personal growth. We can begin again.

I am a beginner. I believe in infinite possibilities for my life. Amen.

December 29 – A time for renewal

Rev. Dr. Anne Atwell

“It is always quietly thrilling to find yourself looking at a world you know well but have never seen from such an angle before.”

Bill Bryson

Christmastide is a time to ponder how we will move forward with the experience of renewed hope, joy, peace, and love. We can be intentional about weaving these positive attributes into our daily living. This may invite us to look at ourselves and our world in a different way as we celebrate the birth of a child who changed everything! Let us now celebrate the coming of infinite possibilities!

Holy God, be with me as I move toward positive new experiences. I honor this time of renewal and I am open to the joy it will bring. Amen.

December 30 – Divine goodness

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“I believe with all my heart in one Power, and that one, good.”

Fannie B. James

“God is taking care of all my wants; I trust God with all my heart.” Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein

“[We are] helped by the Divine Mind who needs but to be called to come to [our] aid.” Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein

Divine Science pioneer Fannie Brooks James and Jewish Science co-founder Morris Lichtenstein both assure us that God is good and God’s goodness can be trusted and affirmed and embraced. When we know ourselves to be always in God’s presence, forever part of God, and when we know God to be Goodness Itself, then trusting, embracing, and accepting that goodness is a natural, comforting, and empowering way to pray. There is one Power, It is good, and we can trust It with all our hearts; It will come to our aid.

I trust and give thanks for the goodness of God. And so it is.

December 31 – God bless 2021

Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins

“The power of the eternal One is ready to move in my life.”

Helen Zagat

“I am filled with divine hope and cheer.” Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein

2020 presented us with a global pandemic, an economy that struggled because of it, a contentious election, wild fires and other effects of climate change, and a lot of loss. In 2020, we also proved ourselves resilient. People were kind. We dared to summon hope. We were generous. Even in times of challenge, there were beautiful moments, heart connections, and even a few miracles. I don't know what 2021 will look like, but I trust there are blessings waiting for us. We will meet challenges with dignity and courage, and we will make the most of opportunities. There will also be miracles. May God bless us abundantly throughout 2021!

Divine Power is ready to move in my life.

I am filled with hope and cheer. And so it is.





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