

## A Day of Fasting and Reflection

Personal Retreat Day 3

### **Morning Prayer:**

Lord, one of the most difficult prayers to say is, 'Please grant me guidance', because I know that You will do just that. Even when I ask for guidance, for Divine counsel, I sometimes fear the response. Today I am participating in the holy ritual of fasting. My intention is to empty myself of that which is insignificant to my life journey – but how do I know what that could mean? I could be releasing everything I own – or perhaps that fear is still more evidence that I do not trust the heavens. I prefer to release things from my life on my terms, like emptying out a closet of worn out clothing. I cannot imagine turning over that task to You, Lord. Would I wake up one morning and find one boring gray dress hanging by itself in my closet or a designer wardrobe? Turning everything over to You is like that – a jump into the unknown. I fear unknown Divine space with its endless possibilities of unraveling my life, so I hold on to everything. In my own way, I have become a hoarder of stuff. I hoard negative memories I should have released a long time ago. I hoard wounds I should have forgiven a years ago. I hoard resentments out of habit, because it suits my pride. I will admit in the silence and sacred space of a prayer that hoarding is hard work – and it is psychically heavy. I can sense all the weight of the negativity that I am holding on to me. It is useless psychic matter that weighs me down. It's time to let it go, to lighten up my being, to literally let Your Light in. So, my intention in fasting today, Lord, is to feel the release of psychic weight from my body that I have accumulated by hoarding parts of my life that are long over and unnecessary to my present life. I do not want to use these rotting psychic free radicals as fodder for creating my present life. I do not want those toxins invading my imagination any more. Today I will imagine that I am cleaning out the closets of my heart, washing away wounds, freeing my inner archive of negative narratives I no longer want to hear. Hover over me as I do this, Lord. Pour Light over me and through me. Help me to release all that is a burden to my mind, my body, my heart and my soul. Amen.

**The significant question to focus on today: What in me needs to be emptied or released?**

### **Guiding Message:**

Spiritual fasting has a long and rich history. Fasting is a ritual of cleansing, of preparation, of release. During a prolonged fast (three days or more), the deeply held belief is that the strength of a person's spirit will spiritually replenish the individual as the strength of the body declines from lack of nourishment. Like undergoing extreme rituals of initiation, such as going on a genuine walkabout in the Australian outback as a young Aborigine, the initiate can only discover the power hidden within his or her soul by being in a situation that requires soul power. Reading about the power of your soul does not make that inner power real. It just

makes you more curious about your inner holy substance. Reading about love does not make love real, either. You have to experience love to know love.

Sacred literature, in particular the Old and New Testaments, makes a point of noting that Moses, Jesus, the apostles, or others fasted and when. Even for the most enlightened human beings, fasting was a ritual essential to their spiritual life. Jesus and Moses went on 40-day fasts in the desert, a number more likely symbolic of the stamina of their souls than the actual length of time. They emptied themselves of earthly distractions in order to hear only the voice of God. They needed to feel unencumbered, unattached to any expression of physical power – even the power possessed by their own physical needs. As so many of you know, Jesus was tempted by the devil during his 40-day fast in the desert. The devil offered him the bargain: Give me the power of your soul and I will give you all the power the physical Earth/society has to offer. We know how that turned out. But the value of the power of the soul of Jesus was worth the world for the demon.

A spiritual fast puts up a type of temporary barrier between our physical senses and our spiritual senses. We become more aware of the distinction between the physical and sacred dimensions. During a fast, we are positioned to observe the power our cravings have over us and the controlling power our biology holds over our spirit. We can feel our bodies craving sugar or salt or alcohol with more intensity than usual, for instance, because we have decided not to respond to those cravings. And so those cravings increase, like a screaming two-year-old who refuses to take a nap. We can observe how impatient we can become when we are uncomfortable. Fasting is the opportunity to witness how you behave when you are vulnerable, in this case, by choice.

## **Focus on the Spirit, not the Fast:**

We get through a spiritual fast, however, by focusing on the spiritual part of the fast and not by obsessing about what you are denying yourself for a day or two. Obsessing about the fasting part reduces this sacred ritual to nothing more than dieting for a day. Fasting is the support activity to that which is your spiritual focus: **Releasing psychic weight and debris.**

Rarely do you put time aside to reflect upon the psychic debris – or psychic free radicals, as I like to call this stuff – that you are carrying in your energy system. Rarely do you think about this psychic “weight” as the heavy stuff that builds up in your energy field as the substance responsible for energetic exhaustion or malaise or depression or lack of focus. But this is the stuff that causes those sensations or experiences. You cannot be clear-thinking or buoyant and highly energetic when you are burdened by psychic debris. And here’s something to keep in mind: We are governed by the Laws of Nature/Mystical Laws. One of these is the Law of Magnetic Attraction. Reflection on this: Your psychic debris attracts psychic debris. If that isn’t a reason to clear out your stuff, what is?

## Fasting Instructions:

There are different ways to fast. In general, fasting means that you avoid the intake of all solid foods and in the extreme, even liquids. That is not what we are going to do. First, not everyone is capable of doing a 24-hour fast, especially if you are maintaining your busy ordinary life. People who undertook extreme fasts tended to do that in places where they could minimize their physical activities, such as monasteries. Or they have group support, as in the 30-day holy Ramadan fast that occurs in the ninth-month of the Muslim religious calendar. Knowing that your whole religious community is fasting helps you to maintain your fast even in your weakest moments standing alone in your kitchen. It is during those times that you draw upon the power of the collective soul force that supports you spiritually. Such support is one of the mystical power threads of religion or spiritual communities, just as mystical power threads are a part of support groups like AA that actually require a gathering of devoted souls to channel their particular healing grace. A group soul is exactly that – a group of people who thread their souls together through commitment to sacred principles, truths and beliefs in support of one another. This collective support can be drawn upon like a grace bank account in times of distress or weakness, like getting through a fast or a difficult day in which you want to reach for a drink. Recalling your commitment to a group or the strength of others in a group or the hardships others endured generates a flow of grace to you, grace their life journey earned that now flows abundantly to you, as yours does to them. Weaving your spiritual life with others is like joining a huge collective grace bank account.

- For our purposes, I recommend Sunday 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. If that is too extreme, please modify to six to eight hours.
- I am suggesting that all of us avoid solid foods for that 12-hour period of time but intake fluids all day long – all kinds of fluids except smoothies, alcohol, cappuccinos; food products that are obviously stimulants and common sense tells you that you would not see them on a fast. Just imagine a monk drinking a Starbucks on a fast.
- For fasting enthusiasts, please avoid extreme fasting. That is, maintain fluid intake. And if you are under medical care, ***you must maintain all medical protocols.***
- Sometimes it's not practical to go without food. It may also be risky to your health. So, we have to make adjustments on how to approach the ritual of spiritual fasting appropriate to the environment in which you are living and your health. While 12-hours is hardly a marathon, still if you are doing physical labor or working with a lot of people, you are going to experience hunger in a way that I, for example, sitting at my desk in the quietness of my home will not. Know your strength and your limits.
- You may also choose to avoid certain food items as your fast. For example, you may decide to release all sugar or wheat products for 12 (or even 24-hours). For some people, going without sugar for a day takes far more effort than going without food.

- So please adjust this fast with common sense. You know your health and your body. This is a spiritual fast, not penance.
- Dine after 6:00 and please eat a light meal; that is, please avoid fried, fast foods, pizza, pasta, burgers, steaks. Dine on fish, chicken, veggies, salad, etc.
- At the end of the day, take a bath or shower. Cleanse the day and close it down with the ritual of bathing.

## **Prayer and Reflection time during the day:**

The simplest of prayers said often is like a song in the soul. Take time during this day for reflection time. Attend to the task of the day. Pay attention to what is bubbling up from your spiritual nerve center.

“Lord, take all that is unnecessary so that I may continue my life fully present in who I am now.”

## **End of Day Prayer:**

“I am empty, Lord. I have no idea what is no longer in my soul or in my energy field. I feel lighter and Light-filled. I am aware that I am changed my life today, but I do not know how. I know that every prayer changes my life. All prayers are powerful. But tonight, I release myself to the care of your angels. Let me take flight with them tonight, Lord, into the healing realm. Let Your grace of healing pour into me release me from wounds and resentments old and new. Help me to become a stronger person, Lord. I do not want to collect more wounds, to start hording all over again. Instead I want a soul with stamina and compassion. It is wiser for me to ask for the grace of healing and compassion than to always be in need of healing because I am so easily wounded by this gift of life. Let the angels return me to my body before the morning sun rises, Lord, healed and renewed. And hover over me, Lord, all through the days and moments of my life. Amen.