

Getting High on Soul Food

Personal Retreat Day 4

Morning Prayer:

Lord, today I come to You an empty vessel. I have prepared myself to receive Your guidance, to dwell in holy teachings, to open myself to inspiration. Today I turn my eyes and my senses upward, away from the distractions of the physical world. If I could separate my soul from my physical form for even an instant to sense the wholeness of Divine creation, I would do that. That one thought form – that we are separate – is the source of more suffering. It is a powerful illusion. What is separate in this universe? Everything is governed by the same laws. If I truly understood that, how would I be different? Would I comprehend the language of the trees and flowers and other living creatures? Would I understand the songs of birds? Would plants reveal their full healing power? Would I see the nature spirits that wander through my garden? Wholeness is not a word, Lord. I know that. It is a level of consciousness. What changes would I experience in me if I were no longer fractured but whole? Perhaps I would no longer have any fears about being alive or empowering others or comprehending truth. It takes courage to ask for wholeness, Lord, but I am asking for the grace of courage to help me become a whole human being. I want my head and my heart to speak as one. I want my illusions to melt away so that I may embrace life with clarity. I want to cease projecting my negativity on to others. And in truth, I fear the journey of getting to wholeness but that is the journey of life. I would rather live that journey consciously, Lord, so that I am able to pray for guidance, than to pretend that life is about something else. Hover over me, Lord, now and always.

The significant question of the day: What do I need to do to become whole?

Guiding Message:

After the fast comes the meal. Today is all about inspiration and dwelling in holy writings. Today is about lifting your vibration about the fray of earthly concerns and absorbing grace and spiritual truths. You are receptive on this day, spiritual open. You have air space available inside of you, having emptied yourself of spiritual and physical toxins. You are ready for truths to come in and take root, perhaps in ways that would not have happened before.

- Sacred literature includes traditional writings such as the scriptures.
- Several authors can provide inspirational writings. Among them:
 - The writings of Thomas Merton
 - Ursula K Le Guin – Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching: A About the way and the Power of the Way
 - The writings of John O’Donohue
 - The Gift – Poems by Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master; Translations by Daniel Ladinsky
 - The Psalms: Prayers of Many Moods by Ronald Quillo
 - The Mystic Hours by Wayne Teasdale
 - Daily Kabbalah: Wisdom from the Tree of Life by Gershon Winkler
 - Entering the Castle by C. Myss
 - The poetry of Mary Oliver and Emily Dickenson

These are just a few of the numerous available inspirational texts that are available to you. You may already have your favorite writings. The task today is to utilize them. Your focus today is on the task of becoming a whole person, congruent, unable to be shattered so easily on this journey that is your life.

Let me share a sample from the Daily Kabbalah: “It is within man’s power to seek God; it is not with his power to find Him.” How rich is that? And how true? You can spend all day dwelling in the power of that one truth. We do not have the power to find God. Realizing that one truth should cause a person to stop asking questions that cannot be answered – those cosmic sized questions about why things happen as they do in our lives. We are not meant to have answers to those questions, though we are free to ask all the questions we want. Perhaps one day we will learn through endless frustration to stop wasting our time and instead invest in prayers that can be answered in ways our human mind can comprehend.

What do I need to become whole? That is the question to carry in your spiritual gut today.

Other inspirational selections:

- We are endlessly searching for God. But at some point, we need to acknowledge that this search is a substitute for something else. Perhaps we do not want to acknowledge good and evil, right and wrong, honesty and dishonesty. Perhaps we want to keep our dark side hidden for a while longer. Perhaps we find our doubts useful. Or perhaps we are under the illusion that doubt is power.
- From the Daily Kabbalah: The Hebrew word for the physical universe is o'lam, which also means "hidden" because the universe deliberately hides the Creator who can only be discovered in the marvels of the universe. Therefore, God is only sought but never found, because the wonders of this universe can never be fathomed in one lifetime by one person.
- God sometimes directs us to be holy troublemakers. Speaking the truth – not your truth, but the truth – can cause trouble. Speaking up for a person, defending someone getting attacked, standing up for human rights takes courage. But the authentic spiritual path is a journey of self-knowledge and spiritual self-esteem, developing the courage to see, understand, and live by higher truths. Inevitably you will become a holy troublemaker.
- It always takes great courage to practice spiritual reflection, to examine your conscience and inner agendas that motivate your choices and actions – the words you speak to others, or do not say. Often times, this practice leaves you feeling very good about yourself. Other times, it shines the light on the truth that you made a conscious choice to withhold grace from someone and such a choice keeps you fractured. But it is also an opportunity to examine why that choice was made, would you do it again or would you challenge yourself to draw from inner grace? Nothing is easy about looking inward with the intention of seeking the truth but keep this truth in mind at all times: Others see the truth about us all the time – just as you do about so many people. Think of how easily you spot the archetypes of other people when you are "people watching". We label people in the blink of an eye. Tossing out a label on someone is the same as picking out one of their archetypes – Geek, Hermit, Mother, Scatterbrain (kind of a subset), Networker, Busybody. You get the picture. We cannot stop ourselves from identifying archetypal patterns. It is instinctual because we intuitively sense their power field. And we are snoops, let's face it. But know this: We are open books to other people. That means you are an open book to everyone. You cannot hide your inner agendas especially in this age in which most of us have evolved our intuitive senses. We read each other like open books. It is far wiser to live by that truth and do your spiritual homework so that others do not have to do it for you.

Prayer and reflection time during the day:

Lord, what is wholeness for me? Where is my life without balance? I breathe in the grace of tranquility in this moment and sense its power radiate through my life like a guide. What is not tranquil? Like a guiding beam, I will follow the Light of this grace to all that needs my attention.

End of the Day Prayer:

Lord, make me a still place of light and love. Let me radiate enough grace that others may dwell and rest in that grace for a while. Help me to become whole enough to allow Your healing grace to flow through me to others. Images fall into my mind while I am in prayer sometimes. When I feel the calming influence of grace come upon me, I can once again breathe my way backwards, away from this moment, Lord, and into that place of subtle origin. I can feel myself melting into the vast expanse of the cosmos. Sometimes I can see the endless, living universe for a tiny micro second, but only with the eyes of my soul. My physical eyes cannot even open, my body nothing but lead. But I am never more alive than when I am free in that tiny molecule of a second, the mystical micro-blink of contact with all that is sacred and holy. This whole universe is a living theater of grace. It is all that You are. It is all that we are. Why do we fear that truth so much? It is such a powerful truth that in a micro-second would heal everything. Hover over me, Lord. Let the grace of Clarity come into me. I must be able to see myself clearly for the choices to become whole are mine and mine alone. Amen.