

Winter Feast for the Soul 2016 Opening Ceremony

This simple interfaith ceremony was first used in France in the early 20th Century. Man's search for Truth is found in many spiritual traditions that extend throughout recorded history. In this Candle Light Opening ceremony we honor the unity of these traditions as a way of bringing people together under the umbrella of our 40-day period of commitment to spiritual practice. We are all one in our search for peace.

1. Start with a few moments of noticing your breath. This can be anywhere from 1 to 15 minutes.
2. Visualize an altar with candles on it. Imagine a large Candle of Truth being lit, while you say these words:

I open this ceremony with the lighting of the candle of Truth.

Then imagine a candle being lit for each of the following traditions while you read the prayer. Take a few moments to contemplate each prayer. What does it mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

a. Native American

There is a river flowing now very fast.

It is so great and so swift that there are those who will be afraid.

They will try to hold on to the shore.

They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly.

Know that the river has its destination.

The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, ☐keep our eyes open and our heads above the water.

And I say, see who is there with you and celebrate.

At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves.

For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt.☐

The time of the lone wolf is over.

Gather yourselves.

Banish the word struggle from your attitude and vocabulary.

All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

We are the ones we have been waiting for.

~ Message from the Hopi Elders

b. Buddhist

May all living beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May we all be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

May we always rejoice in the happiness of others.

May we abide in equanimity, free from attachment and aversion.

~ The Divine Abodes, or the Four Immeasurables

c. Judaism

Let the rain come and wash away the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds held and nurtured over generations.

Let the rain wash away the memory of the hurt, the neglect.

Then let the sun come out and fill the sky with rainbows.

Let the warmth of the sun heal us wherever we are broken.

Let it burn away the fog so that we can see each other clearly.

So we can see beyond labels, ☐beyond accents, gender or skin color.

Let the warmth and brightness of the sun melt our selfishness.

So we can share the joys and feel the sorrows of our neighbors.

And let the light of the sun be so strong that we will see all people as our neighbors.

Let the earth, nourished by rain, bring forth flowers to surround us with beauty.

And let the mountains teach our hearts to reach upward to heaven.

Amen

A Prayer for the World - Rabbi Harold Kushner – 2003

d. Christian

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as
to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

~ Saint Francis of Assisi

e. Islam

Move beyond any attachment to names.
Every war and every conflict between human beings has happened because of some disagreement about names.
It's such an unnecessary foolishness, because just beyond the arguing there's a long table of companionship, set and waiting for us to sit down.
What is praised is one, so the praise is one too, many jugs being poured into a huge basin.
All religions, all this singing, one song.
The differences are just illusion and vanity.
Sunlight looks slightly different on this wall than it does on that wall and a lot different on this other one, but it is still one light.
We have borrowed these clothes, these time-and-space personalities, from a light, and when we praise, we pour them back in.
Jelaluddin Rumi - 13th century (Translation by Coleman Barks)

f. Yoga / Hindu

Still your mind in me, still yourself in me,
And without doubt you shall be united with me,
Lord of Love, dwelling in your heart.
But if you cannot still your mind in me,
Learn to do so through the practice of meditation.
If you lack the will for such self-discipline,
Engage yourself in selfless service of all around you,
For selfless service can lead you at last to me.
If you are unable to do even this,

Surrender yourself to me in love,
Receiving success and failure with equal calmness
As granted by me.
Better indeed is knowledge than mechanical
practice.
Better than knowledge is meditation.
But better still is surrender in love,
Because there follows immediate peace.

~ Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gita

g. Pagan

Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.

Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the infinite peace to you.
- Adapted from ancient Gaelic runes

h. The final candle to be lit honors “all those, known and unknown, who have held aloft the lamp of Truth”.

- 3. End the ceremony with being aware of your breath – from 1-30 minutes.
- 4. If you like, write a little about your experience of doing this ceremony in the space below.