

Welcome to the Winter Feast for the Soul

Thank you for observing the Feast for the Soul. Just by making the commitment to observe the Feast, you put into motion a wonderful opportunity to reflect on and acknowledge that your spiritual life is a vital part of your life, and fruits of your practice are essential to peace on this planet.

Thousands of people worldwide observe the Feast so you are in good company.

Think of the Feast as **an intensive — a spiritual practice retreat**. It's a 40-day period during which you dedicate 10 to 40 minutes each day to your spiritual practice all while living the life you already live. You don't have to head into a monastic setting. Instead, you'll incorporate the deepening of your spiritual practice where you live. Though your life may be busy with work, family, and friends, during the Feast it is possible to reclaim and put your spiritual life first.

How to embark on the Feast.

1. **Set a Practice Space:** How you prepare your inner and outer spaces as you move through the Feast sets the tone for the season and the year ahead. Find a place in your home, and make it sacred. You might create a practice space that stays up throughout the Feast, by setting up an altar with photos and special objects.
2. **Set a Practice Time:** Choose a time in the morning when you can dive deep into your practice or, set aside two sessions during the day at times that work best for you. Whatever your spiritual practice is, whether you choose to pray, meditate, read sacred texts, or give yourself time for reflection and creativity, you can participate in the Feast.

Next, on the 15th, begin the Feast.

1. **Perform or participate in an Opening Ceremony.** This is a special way to begin. It is entirely optional, it's a ritual that has been observed since the early 1900s.
2. **Deepen Your Spiritual Practice:** For those who already practicing a silent meditation each day, perhaps during the Feast you could add a few new components to your daily spiritual practice, such as reading sacred texts, engaging in a creative practice, or doing other mindful activities.

I believe our work is to find and create an unshakable peaceful interior so that it resides in the altar of our hearts every day of our lives. If you somehow miss a day, or two, you can always begin again. You can begin each moment anew, each day anew, each relationship a new, and each day you can face the world with a new perspective by diving in to your personal spiritual practice. In fact, you can start right now.

This is a time of deep practice. I am practicing with you. Thank you for adding yourself to the community of peacemakers who begin a journey to true inner peace.

Offered by Sarah McLean, Director, Feast for the Soul

Feast for the Soul, Inc.

Sedona, Arizona

www.FeastfortheSoul.org



Some Suggestions for Your Daily Practice

Like exercise, any amount of meditation can bring unforeseen results. Expect the unexpected. Don't get attached to results. All the possible experiences that may come from your practice are your teachers, and everything that you need resides within you.

There is an old Tibetan saying "you cannot get butter by squeezing sand, no matter how long you try." A person could keep squeezing sand for a thousand years. When you ask him "what are you doing?" the answer is "trying to get butter". We all know that he will never get butter, because sand is devoid of butter.

Our rational mind tries to understand ultimate truth, but it never can, because it is the wrong tool. Our mind is always trying to figure out things that are beyond it. How do we realize that which is beyond our ordinary mind? We go inside ourselves and realize what is keeping us from opening our heart - doubt, resistance, guilt, fear, and shame. We shine the light of awareness on those feelings and thoughts and they usually dissolve. Love, courage, trust, and bliss are available to us when we lose our defensiveness.

Meditation is the primary tool for providing us this opening. How do we take meditation into our daily lives when we get up from our sitting meditation? Here are some methods you might find useful.

SETTING AN INTENTION: As you get up in the morning, maybe even before you get out of bed, set your intention for your day. You might intend to observe your daily meditation, feel gratitude, keep your temper, or notice the beauty around you. You might intend to develop clarity and insight, love and compassion for yourself and others. Whatever it is, define it to yourself, and visualize how you might use this intention as you go through your day. Repeat it in your mind until you remember what it is, and remind yourself of it as you go through the day.

PAUSE # 1: This is a useful mini meditation. My teacher Anam Thubten suggested that we pause and meditate every 2 hours during the day for a short period of time, just a pause, really. I don't time these meditations or do them on a schedule. I keep a little chime and whenever I pass it, I ring it and pause as long as it takes for the sound vibrations to fade away completely. When I am away from the chime, I often just play that vibration in my mind and stop whatever I am doing at the moment. This has been a great thing for me; it puts a little distance from whatever stress you might experience, giving a different perspective immediately.

PAUSE #2: Something or someone bugging you? Wanna say or do something mean or unwise? Pause for a breath or two or three. Look at the emotions and thoughts you are having. Let go of them. Look at the actions that you might take, and their consequences. Is there really a need for you to follow your emotions, or are they leading you into trouble? You can make a choice here, just from putting a pause between yourself and your actions.

JUST BREATHE: Relax. Breathe deeply for several breaths, then normally. Feel your breath coming in through your nostrils and traveling down the body, filling the stomach. Feel the air returning up the body and leaving the nostrils. Feel the vitality that your breath brings to your body, and feel gratitude for your body and your breath. You can stay with the breath and gratitude for as long as you would like.

GRATITUDE: Reflect on all that you have to be grateful for. Notice the person who does you a kindness, the people that love you for who you are, people who are difficult for you (they are your teachers), the beauty of the earth's sights and sounds in nature, the blessing of a whole body, sufficient food, and shelter, all the blessings of this precious human existence.

WALKING MEDITATION: Start with an erect and easy posture, hands folded in front of you, clasped behind your back, or hanging loosely at your sides. Take a slow step forward, paying attention to the set of your heel and toe, the movement of each of your muscles, and your breath. Breathe naturally. Put your foot down slowly, gently but firmly, and take another step, and another, each step slow and reverent, mindful of the whole incredible workings of your body that make walking possible. You may do this inside or outside.

Buddha covered hundreds of miles alone or with his followers doing walking meditation. You may want to imagine you are walking with him, or some other teacher who has guided you.

BLUE SKY MEDITATION: Who knew that our childhood play activity of watching clouds was a meditation? You can meditate on the blue sky and the clouds. Sit or lie down in meditation and look up. Let your gaze fall softly on the sky. Watch the clouds as they appear and disappear. Let your thoughts and feelings arise and dissipate naturally.

The heart of meditation is awareness that is like the vast sky. All arising thoughts and feelings are like clouds which arise and vanish into it. The sky does not reject or claim them. When you abide in sky like awareness, love, wisdom, and compassion shine forth from within like the sun, the moon, and the stars.

Buddha said, "Don't go back over what has passed, nor yearn for what is yet to be. What has passed has been abandoned, and the future is not yet here. The state arising here and now - See it with insight as it is."

Opening Ceremony

You may create a private altar that can be the focus of your meditation throughout the Feast, using the photo included in the packet and any personal items that you wish.

You may open the ceremony with these words (spoken silently or out loud):

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 Opening Ceremony I 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. I open this ceremony with the earnest desire to know the Truth.

Start with a few moments of noticing your breath. This can be anywhere from 1 to 15 minutes.

Read the following prayers from different faith traditions. Take a few moments to contemplate each prayer. What does it mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

a. Native American

In beauty I walk.
With beauty before me, I walk.
With beauty behind me, I walk.
With beauty below me, I walk.
With beauty above me, I walk.
With beauty all around me, I walk.
It is finished in beauty. ~ Navajo Chant

b. Buddhist

You must be lamps unto yourselves.
Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help.
Hold firm to the truth as a lamp and refuge,
And do not look for refuge in anything besides yourselves. ~ Buddha: Digha Nikaya 11:99 Mahaparinibbana Suttanta

c. Christian

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work too may be holy
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy
Guide me then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen ~ St. Augustine's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

d. Judaism

May we see the day when war and bloodshed cease,
when a great peace will embrace the whole world.
Then nation shall not threaten nation,
and humankind will not again know war.
For all who live on earth shall realize,
we have not come into being to hate or destroy,
We have come into being,
to praise, to labour and to love.
Compassionate God, bless all the leaders of all nations,
with the power of compassion.
Fulfill the promise conveyed in Scripture:
"I will bring peace to the land,
and you shall lie down and no one shall terrify you.
I will rid the land of vicious beasts
and it shall not be ravaged by war."
Let love and justice flow like a mighty stream.
Let peace fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.
And let us say: Amen ~ Jewish Prayer for Peace

e. Islam

Whether you love the One
or another human being,
if you love enough,
in the end you will come into
the presence of Love itself. ~ Jelaluddin Rumi -13th century (Translation by Coleman Barks)

f. Hindu

The light that lives in the sun,
Lighting all the world,
The light of the moon,
The light that is in fire:
Know that light to be mine.
My energy enters the earth,
Sustaining all that lives:
I become the moon,
Giver of water and sap,
To feed the plants and the trees.
Flame of life in all,
I consume the many foods,
Turning them into strength
That upholds the body.
I am in all hearts,
I give and take away
Knowledge and memory:
I am all that the Vedas tell,
I am the teacher,
The knower of Vedanta.

~ From the Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. XV, Devotion to the Supreme Spirit (tr. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood)

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*

End the ceremony with being aware of your breath – from 1-30 minutes.

If you like, write a little about your experience of doing this ceremony below.

Describe your state before and after the Opening Ceremony.

What challenges arose for you?

Please describe any images that arose during your meditation.

What bodily sensations were you aware of?

Take a moment to consider: What do you think will be your greatest challenges in doing the Feast? How will you support yourself to build new habits of self-care and mindfulness?

Daily Sitting Practice ~ Journal

Record your meditation time for each day of the Winter Feast. (*You can sit one or more times during each day to reach your goal.*) Also write a little about your experience each day. For example, you might comment on:

- The challenges that arose for you
- Bodily sensations you were aware of
- Your state of mind before and after the session
- How you brought your meditation practice into your daily life

Day/Date	Sit Time	Notes
1 Jan 15		
2 Jan 16		
3 Jan 17		
4 Jan 18		
5 Jan 19		
6 Jan 20		
7 Jan 21		
8 Jan 22		
9 Jan 23		
10 Jan 24		

Daily Sitting Practice ~ Journal

Day/Date	Sit Time	Notes
11 Jan 25		
12 Jan 26		
13 Jan 27		
14 Jan 28		
15 Jan 29		
16 Jan 30		
17 Jan 31		
18 Feb 1		
19 Feb 2		
20 Feb 3		

Daily Sitting Practice ~ Journal

Day/Date	Sit Time	Notes
21 Feb 4		
22 Feb 5		
23 Feb 6		
24 Feb 7		
25 Feb 8		
26 Feb 9		
27 Feb 10		
28 Feb 11		
29 Feb 12		
30 Feb 13		

Daily Sitting Practice ~ Journal

Day/Date	Sit Time	Notes
31 Feb 14		
32 Feb 15		
33 Feb 16		
34 Feb 17		
35 Feb 18		
36 Feb 19		
37 Feb 20		
38 Feb 21		
39 Feb 22		
40 Feb 23		

Guided Meditation

By Anam Thubten

Anam Thubten is a Tibetan Buddhist who travels the world teaching and supporting people in their meditation and study. He is the teacher of many of the meditation volunteers who visit this unit.

Please hold the intention that you are here to open your heart and awaken to ultimate truth in this very moment and place. You might like to think that you are here to bring about healing, clarity, and insight, and to develop love and compassion.

The ancient masters encouraged us to meditate in solitary places like forests and mountains that inspire us to be in contact with deep serenity within. Without going anywhere, where you are right now in this very moment can be the mountain or forest. The only thing is to be fully present. Then serenity and insight will arise on their own.

Sit in a comfortable posture with your back comfortably straight. Relax your shoulders. Rest your hands on your knees or in your lap.

Bring your attention to your breath. Feel your breath entering and leaving your nostrils. Focus on your breath. If you are distracted by thoughts, there is no need to push them away, just return to your breath. Keep your effort gentle and easy.

Now, follow the sensation of it filling your chest, and expanding your belly. Enjoy noticing the subtleties of each breath. Stay with that a while.

Let go of following your breath. Rest in calmness.

Let all your thoughts and feelings arise and dissipate naturally. Don't follow, reject, or judge them. Just witness whatever arises. If you are distracted, go back to your breath until you feel present.

The heart of meditation is awareness that is like a vast sky, thoughts and feelings are like clouds. They appear and vanish into it. The sky does not reject or claim them. When you abide in sky like awareness, love, compassion and wisdom shine forth like the sun, the moon, and the stars.



Daily Contemplations for Days 1-10: Kindness

- Meditate a few minutes to settle your mind.
- When your mind has settled enough to be able to focus with quiet attention, read the Contemplation for the day, either out loud or silently. Then slowly repeat it silently to yourself a number of times until you feel like it has sunk in.
- Notice what comes up as you repeat the Contemplation silently to yourself. Are there any specific images, memories, feelings, thoughts, or ideas that come up? What does it mean to you?
- If you wish, write your thoughts below the Contemplation.

Day 1 *Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. ~Wendy Mass*

Day 2 *Three things in human life are important: The first is to be kind, the second is to be kind, and the third is to be kind. ~Henry James*

Day 3 *The Maitreya Buddha, the future Buddha, manifests as a dog far ahead of his Buddha incarnation in order to encourage frightened people to rise above their fears and develop trust and affection for another sentient being. ~Robert Thurman*

Day 4 *Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see. ~Mark Twain*

Day 5 *My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness. ~Dalai Lama XIV*

Day 6 *You might be able to love somebody tomorrow that you can't love today. ~Anam Thubten*

Day 7 *This life is all about learning to love. This is the thing that matters most - Love - a word almost too sacred to utter. Love the sorrow as well as the joy. ~Anam Thubten*

Day 8 *Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help, to assist some parts of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do into stand up and show your soul. ~Clarissa Pinkola Estes*

Day 9 *Grace is the wonderful spirit that imbues every fiber of our being when we practice the fruits of the spirit: Kindness, Patience, Understanding, Forgiveness, Love, Gentleness, Fellowship, and Endurance. ~Edgar Cayce*

Day 10 *All the joy that the world contains comes from wishing good to others. All the suffering comes from wanting pleasure for oneself. ~Shantideva*

Three Mindful Breathing Exercises and Techniques

By Dr. Andrew Weil

Practicing a regular breathing exercise can be calming and energizing, helping with stress-related problems ranging from panic attacks to digestive disorders. Since breathing is something we can control and regulate, it is a useful tool. Try each of these to see how they affect your stress and anxiety levels.

Exercise 1 The Stimulating Breath

This should help you raise energy and increase alertness.

Inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose, in and out breaths being equal in duration, but as short as possible. This is a noisy breathing exercise.

Try for 3 in and out breath cycles per second. Breathe normally after each cycle.

Do not do for more than 15 seconds on your first try. Increase your time by 5 seconds or so, until you reach a full minute.

Exercise 2 (4-7-8) or Relaxing Breath

A short and simple exercise that can be done anywhere. Sit with your back straight. Place the tip of your tongue just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there throughout the exercise. Purse your lips slightly and exhale through your mouth and around your tongue.

Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of 4. Hold your breath for a count of 7. Exhale to a count of 8. With practice you can get used to inhaling and exhaling more deeply. Do no more than 4 breaths at a time when you begin, at least twice a day. Later, extend to 8 breaths, if you wish. Use it to relieve internal or external stress, and to help you fall asleep.

Exercise 3 Breath Counting

Sit in a comfortable position, spine straight and head slightly inclined. Gently close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Then let the breath come naturally without trying to influence it. Ideally, it will be slow and quiet, but depth and rhythm may vary.

To begin the exercise, count 1 to yourself as you exhale. The next time you exhale, count 2, and so on up to 5. Then begin a new cycle, counting 1 on exhalation and so for to 5 again.



Daily Contemplations for Days 11-20: Meditation

- Meditate a few minutes to settle your mind.
- When your mind has settled enough to be able to focus with quiet attention, read the Contemplation for the day, either out loud or silently. Then slowly repeat it silently to yourself a number of times until you feel like it has sunk in.
- Notice what comes up as you repeat the Contemplation silently to yourself. Are there any specific images, memories, feelings, thoughts, or ideas that come up? What does it mean to you?
- If you wish, write your thoughts in the space next to the Contemplation.

Day 11 *As we practice, all sorts of things are churned up, but we regard them as waves on the ocean, ripples in the pond. ~Chogyam Trungpa*

Day 12 *You are missing a great opportunity if you don't reflect on your interior life. There are many moments in life when we can pause and reflect. Reflections make our life rich. One important reflection is to realize how precious and rare human life is. ~Anam Thubten*

Day 13 *In regard to the practice of sitting meditation, the idea is constancy because each time you sit you get softened more and more. ~Chogyam Trungpa*

Day 14 *I believe people are as happy as they make up their minds to be. ~Abraham Lincoln*

Day 15 *In meditation you can be free to put your awareness where you will instead of being grabbed, pushed, or pulled by each sense impression. A being who who is totally free, who does not cling to anything, is liberated. ~Ram Dass*

Day 16 *The two most powerful warriors are patience and time. ~Anonymous*

Day 17 *You do not need to know precisely what is happening or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope. ~Thomas Merton*

Day 18 *Don't tell yourself, "I shouldn't have these thoughts." Relax every cell. Let yourself fall down onto the deepest ground of your being. Let everything arise. ~Anam Thubten*

Day 19 *Your true evolution is to do with the arising of awareness in you as you go about your life. ~Eckhart Tolle*

Day 20 *The feeling that everything is spinning out of control comes from the fact that it is. ~Anonymous*

What Did You Need?

By Chris Strickling, October 27, 2018

It was a Saturday morning, 7:00 a.m. I stood on the sidewalk in front of my daughter's apartment in Prospect Place, Brooklyn, New York, ready to call a cab. I was headed for Penn Station, got an Amtrak ticket for Philadelphia to see a friend. Light rain had started, 41° and falling, cold for someone who spends most of her time in the Yucatán. I'm a white woman, the lines in my face and the gray-white hair make it obvious that I'm grandmother material.

My hands were getting cold as I dialed the Lyft number for my ride. Lyft had been my go-to for the last ten days while I helped with my daughter's wedding. I'd used the app so many times that calling Lyft came naturally. Today, though, standing out in the rain, my phone could not connect. It occurred to me that the wi-fi signal I'd used all week was from my daughter's apartment, and I'd just left there, locking my visitor's key inside. Walking any distance is hard for me even without luggage. I walk with a cane in hand to support my worn-out hip. At 66, I'm beginning that part of life when your body parts are out of warranty. But there was no going back. Pulling two giant suitcases full of wedding clothes and extra shoes, shouldering a smaller bag, I hobbled up the street for a few yards to see if my 4G coverage might kick in to connect me with Lyft or allow me to make a call. No.

Trying not to panic about missing my train, I decided to walk the long block to the neighborhood deli on the corner. The rain kept getting heavier, my shoes got soaked. Not sure that the deli would be open at 7:00 a.m. on a Saturday, but its position on the corner of a busy street could be a better place to try to hail a cab. The soft light from inside told me that the deli was open, so I left my bags outside and pushed my way through the heavy door, even though I didn't see anyone inside. A man about my age came into sight, and I asked if he could call a cab for me. I asked in English, he didn't speak any English. I tried Spanish next, he didn't speak Spanish either, but he gave me a hand signal to stay put, then went to the back of the store and returned with a Spanish-speaker. I felt relieved to tell my story and have the help of someone whose language I spoke. I went outside to wait for the taxi that I thought would be coming, and to make sure my bags didn't walk off.

I was standing on the street corner with my wet suitcases, when a middle-aged woman suddenly appeared and approached me with a sense of urgency.

"Do you have a quarter?" she asked.

"I do," I said as I fished a quarter from my purse. "Is that all you need?" I asked, as I looked up to see her face.

"I dropped the last quarter I needed to buy my train fare today, and I really need to go."

"Are you sure that you only need one quarter? What if you drop it again?" I handed her three more quarters and she took them, smiling. "I hope you catch your train."

"I will," she said as she turned quickly and walked back in the direction she'd come.

I watched as she half-ran back to the station, the dark skin of her hands wet from the rain, water beading up on the surface of her dreadlocked hair. At about the same time that she took off to go get her train ticket, the young man who had made the taxi call for me came out onto the street. He was still talking to someone on the phone, and looking at me, so I knew he was calling about the taxi. I laughed when I heard him tell the taxi driver that he had a "vieja gringa, blanca" client for him. He seemed a little embarrassed that he'd forgotten that I spoke his language. I didn't care, I was happy he was trying to help me. When he got off the phone, he told me that his friend already had a fare this morning and he wouldn't be able to get back to Brooklyn to help me.

"Pues, mil gracias," I offered, as I turned back toward my suitcases.

It couldn't have been more than two or three minutes before I noticed someone running. It was Quarter Lady, crossing the intersection at a good clip, coming straight toward me.

"I thought you had a train to catch," I said.

"Yeah, its maybe 20 minutes 'til the next one."

I nodded, as though I understood.

"You gave me what I needed," she said, in a matter-of-fact voice. "But what did you need?"

What? I thought to myself. Had she turned around and changed her plans to respond to my need? She wasn't required to.

"I need a ride to Penn Station, I'm about to miss my train."

"So, a cab, right? That's what you need?" I nodded.

With that, she turned to face the street so that she could catch any cars that came from either direction at the corner. She was determined to stop every car that turned the corner until she found an unmarked cab. After stopping car number 5 she looked over at me and said,

"I don't accept defeat, we're gonna get you a cab."

It was car number nine that became my ride to Penn Station. The driver was an older black man, bald, with tiny silver earrings in each ear. He drove a long black luxury car, spit-shined to perfection.

"Yeah, I can take her," he said, in his deep, rich voice.

When he opened the trunk of the car the two men from the deli and the quarter lady rushed to get my luggage into the ample trunk. I didn't have to lift anything. I thanked the guys from the deli for helping me and offered them a tip, but they wouldn't take it. Quarter Lady gave me a hug once she knew I was good to go and went back to her day. I got to Penn Station 25 minutes early, paid a fare that was \$6 cheaper than it would have been with Lyft.

I was the only white person in the whole interaction, and I needed help. I was vulnerable on the street that morning. But the middle-eastern deli owner made sure that I got put in touch with his Spanish-speaking employee, who did his best to help, and saw it through to its happy ending. Quarter Lady was absolutely heroic.

It was all so complicated, and simple. Nobody turned away. The word "blessed" comes to mind.

Daily Contemplations for Days 21-30: Gratitude

- Meditate a few minutes to settle your mind.
- When your mind has settled enough to be able to focus with quiet attention, read the Contemplation for the day, either out loud or silently. Then slowly repeat it silently to yourself a number of times until you feel like it has sunk in.
- Notice what comes up as you repeat the Contemplation silently to yourself. Are there any specific images, memories, feelings, thoughts, or ideas that come up? What does it mean to you?
- If you wish, write your thoughts in the space next to the Contemplation.

Day *Our truest life is when we are in dreams awake. ~Henry David Thoreau*

21

Day *Piglet noticed that even though he had A Very Small Heart, it could hold a Rather Large Amount of Gratitude. ~A.A. Milne*

22

Day *Start each day with a positive thought and a grateful heart. ~Roy T Bennett*

23

Day *When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed. ~Maya Angelou*

24

Day *If you want to find happiness, find gratitude. ~Steve Maraboli*

25

Day *We are amazing entities, amazing flow, an impermanent non-singular floating reality - form, feeling, perception, mental constructs constantly changing and morphing. ~Anam Thubten*

26

Day *Attitude is a choice. Happiness is a choice. Kindness is a choice. Giving is a choice. Respect is a choice. Whatever choice you make, makes you. ~Roy T Bennett*

27

Day *Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that Dawn comes after Night, and Spring after the Winter. ~Rachel Carson*

28

Day *If we considered the life of a single flower, our whole life would change. ~Buddha*

29

Day *Let us always meet one another with a smile, for a smile is the beginning of love. ~Mother Teresa*

30

Daily Contemplations for Days 31-40: Inspiration

- Meditate a few minutes to settle your mind.
- When your mind has settled enough to be able to focus with quiet attention, read the Contemplation for the day, either out loud or silently. Then slowly repeat it silently to yourself a number of times until you feel like it has sunk in.
- Notice what comes up as you repeat the Contemplation silently to yourself. Are there any specific images, memories, feelings, thoughts, or ideas that come up? What does it mean to you?
- If you wish, write your thoughts in the space next to the Contemplation.

Day 31 *You don't have to do anything heroic. Be a child, totally innocent. Be ordinary, roll in a meadow, sing nonsense songs, throw rocks in the water. In the end there is no such thing as wasting your life.*
~Anam Thubten

Day 32 *The past situation may have brought you to the present point, but where you go from here is purely up to you.* ~Chogyam Trungpa

Day 33 *Deep within each of us is a garden.* ~Anonymous

Day 34 *In your soul are infinitely precious things that cannot be taken away from you.* ~Oscar Wilde

Day 35 *May the frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be freed; May the powerless find power, and may people think of benefitting each other.* ~Shantideva

Day 36 *Go where there is no path, and begin the trail.* ~Ruby Bridges

Day 37 *There's something inside you that's never been lost.* ~Mr. Rogers

Day 38 *The biggest risk is to not take a risk.* ~Jaap Van Zweden

Day 39 *Now is the time 'cause it's too late to do it sooner.* ~Swami Beyondananda

Day 40 *Be where you are; otherwise you will miss your life.* ~Buddha

Closing Ceremony

On the last day of the Feast, after you have finished your meditation and Contemplation, take a few moments to notice your breath.

You may close the Feast with these words (spoken silently or out loud):

*Bowing in gratitude, I offer the merit of my practice for the past 40 days
for the benefit of all beings everywhere.*

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.

After the Feast

You did it! You observed 40 days of the Feast! Whether you observed your spiritual practice every day or you missed a day or two, you still made a difference in the world. *The idea behind the Winter Feast for the Soul is to create an opportunity for you to bring your practice into your daily life.*

Here are a few helpful hints for sustaining your sitting practice:

- Sit every day, even if it's for a short period. Intentionally dedicate this time of quieting —it is a gift to the soul!
- A few times during each day, pause. Establish contact with your body and breath, feeling the aliveness that is Here.
- Pause more and more—the space of a pause will allow you to come home to your heart and awareness.
- Reflect regularly on your aspiration for spiritual awakening and freedom —your own and that of all beings.
- Remember that, like yourself, everyone wants to be happy and nobody wants to suffer.
- Practice regularly with a group or a friend.
- Use inspiring resources such as books, CD's or DVD's.
- If you miss practice for a day, a week, or a month, simply begin again.
- If you need guidance, ask for help from an experienced meditator or teacher.
- Don't judge your practice —rather, accept what unfolds and trust your capacity to awaken and be free!
- Live with a reverence for life—committed to non-harming, to seeing, honoring and serving the sacred in all beings.

When these 40 days come to a close, your habit of making time to practice will have found an important place in your life. There will be no overwhelming to-do list awaiting you. And you will have formed a habit that you may not want to break.

Moment by Moment

By Trudy Davies

What to do when time is long?

Time can go faster with a cheerful song.

Smiles help make the time feel lighter.

Lifting spirits to make the day brighter.

Pay attention to sensation, thought, sight, and sound.

Try to let boredom pass and enjoy what's around.