

YES ...

And

SUTRAS

OTHER BOOKS BY MARTIN LOWENTHAL

Blessings of the Creative Buddha

Writing in the Dark: Unseen Poems

Buddha and the Art of Intimacy

Alchemy of the Soul

Dawning of Clear Light

Embrace Yes

Heart to Heart, Hand in Hand, Shoulder to Shoulder

Opening the Heart of Compassion
(co-authored with Lar Short)

YES ...

And

SUTRAS

common sense for a dedicated life



MARTIN LOWENTHAL

Dedicated Life Publications



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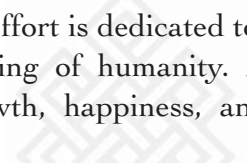
I am grateful to the members of the Dedicated Life Institute for their support and encouragement. The Dedicated Life Institute is an organizational vehicle for presenting these teachings and for students to support their spiritual growth together.

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Lastly, but not least, I am grateful for the support, encouragement, and editorial comments of my wife Karen Edwards.

DEDICATION

This humble effort is dedicated to the personal and communal maturing of humanity. May these sutras support the growth, happiness, and freedom of all beings.





PRELUDE

I am grateful for how infinitely rare it is for the atoms, molecules, and energies of the world to come together for a brief period in the form of my life. What a gift! How am I going to share this gift?

These sutras are a way of sharing the gifts I have received. In ancient India, a sutra contained pithy statements of truth that were designed for reflection, inspiration and insight. The word sutra may have had two root origins in its various usages. One verbal root *siv* meant to sew and suggested a thread that weaves together the elements and dimensions of life. The other root, particularly of Buddhism, may be *sukta*, meaning “well spoken” and “good news” similar to the original meaning in the West of *Gospel*.

Along with sutras, there is also a tradition of commentary on the sutras to clarify, explain and expand them.

What follows participates in this sacred tradition. These passages are an invitation:

to explore the layers of interconnected meaning
that are purposely embedded in the texts,
to meditate on the texts and use them as
practices,
to savor the aftertaste,

to revisit sutras and discover new meanings and resonances,
to speak a sutra aloud, take it to heart, and live it,
to be challenged by confusion,
to be inspired to inquire about how a passage applies
and can be practiced,
to discover the alchemy of how the sutras work together
to discover how key words and insights have evolving histories,
to engage in conversation with others, and
to add commentary.

These sutras are also an alchemical practice, a form of *tantra*. There is a long history to the word *tantra* as well as many meanings. Here the word is associated with the idea of extending ourselves to see and feel the union of wisdom, love, and creation in life, the alchemical marriage not simply of opposites but also of the triune nature of existence—space, relationship, and activity. Traditionally, a tantra was also a text that was made up of sutras. In this sense, YES... AND is a *tantra*.

YES affirms life, the nature of the world, and the truth of all dimensions of being and becoming, as well the sacred insights that flow from whole hearted presence.

AND indicates the posture of continually opening, both to the next moment and to the insightful elaboration of insight and understanding in the form of commentary.

As human beings, creation in the next moment flows from the present. We live with the paradox

of Now as “all there is” *AND* of the next Now. We both “are” *AND* “are becoming.” We presence *AND* open. The world presences Now *AND* Now *AND* Now. The completeness of the Now transforms into the completeness of the next Now. Anything we understand, or come to know must open to *AND* in order to be continually inclusive. *AND* keeps life continually fresh as we learn and grow. *AND* challenges us to keep growing beyond our beliefs, our reactions, our wounds, our certainties, our comfort zones, our experiences and ourselves.

As elaboration and commentary, *AND* does not challenge truth, it expands and adapts it. This suggests that insight, understanding and truth are more of a process of evolution than a static statement about the nature of reality. After each passage, an image of the lotus flower has been inserted. The symbolic lotus, reflecting the growth pattern of the natural lotus, signifies spiritual maturation beyond the mud of our reactive habit body, through the waters of experience and reflection, and into the radiance of awakened aliveness. Each petal represents wisdom, love, and beauty.

The endless knot that appears on the cover and periodically in the book represents:

the interdependence of the sacred and the
everyday,
the interweaving of spirituality with action
the inter-twining of mind, heart and hand,
the interconnectedness of all life
the endless cycle of creation, birth, life, death,
and new life, and

the wisdom paradox of life with and without
beginning or end.

What follows invites you, the reader, to a practice
of meditating with the text and contributing to its
evolution through your own commentary based in
dedicated reflection.





SACRED AFFIRMATION OF YES

Yes is my favorite synonym for God.

☪ *Brother David Steindl-Rast*

It is an everyday yet amazing occurrence when, with the eyes of our heart, we see all things aflame with divine fire.

☪ *Brother David Steindl-Rast*



THE AFFIRMATION OF PROFOUND WISDOM PRESENCE THE YES ! SUTRA

Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom Presence, the Beautiful, and the Sacred.

Dedicated students of Wisdom perceive that we are completely surrounded by and filled with presence manifesting Essence beyond attribution, open to the all inclusive, totally open Essence and rejoice in all manifestation in presence, live in constant opening and forming. As students of Wisdom we aspire to be present in each moment of our feelings, perceptions, impulses, and thoughts and to celebrate the gift of life and all existence with boundless wonder and resounding joy.

In our lives there is birth and death, *YES*.

There is impurity and purity, *YES*.

There is decrease and increase, *YES*.

There is feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness, *YES*.

Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, *YES*.

Appearances, sounds, smells, taste, touch, *YES*.

Love, grief, praise, gratitude, *YES*.

Relationships and end of relationships, *YES*.

Dynamics of sight and mind dynamics, *YES*.

Dynamics of experience and consciousness, *YES*.

Beyond experience, *YES*.

Knowing and not knowing, *YES*.

Ignorance and end of ignorance, *YES*.

Old age and death, *YES*.

Beyond old age and death, *YES*.

Suffering, origin and cessation of suffering, *YES*.

Path and wisdom, *YES*.

Attainment and nonattainment, *YES*.

Dedicated wisdom beings affirm everything, and they abide in the presence of what is. They realize all there is is is. They fear and have no fear of fear. They transcend separateness by holding both the one and the many and attain complete interbeing.

All those who appear as wisdom beings of the past, present and future, by means of profound presence, fully awakened to unsurpassable, true complete presence. Therefore, the great mantra of profound presence, the mantra of great insight and engagement, the supreme mantra of radiance, the mantra that affirms all life and bridges all gaps should be known as truth, since there is no deception. The profound wisdom presence mantra of affirmation is said in this way:

YES! YES! NOW YES! ALWAYS YES! YES!
HAVING GONE COMPLETELY BEYOND TO
THE TOTALITY, ALL HAIL. YES!

This Sutra with allusions to the Heart of Wisdom Sutra is humbly offered to the world and to the great teachers whose wisdom energies inform all wisdom seekers, whose love of all life transcends all judgments, and who challenge us to embrace all that is. May this be of benefit to all and lead swiftly to the happiness, growth and freedom of all beings.



To see the sacred,
is not a matter of seeing some thing
so much as a way of seeing every thing.

YES

And

A first step in sacred perception is affirming “what is.” This *YES* embraces our aliveness and the conditions of life as it shows up in the living moment. Our affirmation reaches beyond the surface to the non-visible dimension of reality—to the meanings, stories, interconnections, and significance that inform and animate everything that is, as well as to the very nature of being. (The enemy of the sacred is the superficial.)



Our *YES* is of the heart
more than the head,
taking us beyond positive thinking
to the spiritual qualities and power of
Presencing,
Opening,
Serving,
Loving, and
Growing.

YES

And

These are the Heart Postures of Affirmation. Our Heart Postures encompass our overall attitudes, ways of perceiving, beliefs about life, reality and ourselves, fears and concerns, and our ways of relating to the world. They include our unconscious, as well as conscious, ideas about who we think we are and what we feel compelled to accept as true about life.

The cultivation and embodiment of sacred Heart Postures of Affirmation aligns our being in such a way as to experience communion with the Divine.



YES as affirmation is
not agreement with
or even liking something.
YES simply affirms what is
bringing alertness to the present moment.

The alertness of *YES*
marries our attention,
the energy of our aliveness, and
a sense of direct relationship with the NOW.

YES



The power of *YES* as Presence
consecrates our lives,
our landscape, our activities, and our relationships.

YES

And

By sanctifying people, places, things, and actions, we transform the surface of the world into a temple with rich sacred relevance. *YES... AND* is not the solution to our problems. *YES* is the aliveness and completeness of presence beyond the problem frame of mind. In *YES* there are no problems, simply "what is." *AND* indicates that we can also grow beyond where we are and into the unknown beyond current understanding. Life is dynamic and, even as we are present in each moment, we can grow into the next.



The experience of aliveness
moves
the energy of life
to a continually fresh edge.
On this edge of the moment,
to be alive, connected and complete
inheres to the fullness of our presence
NOW.

And

the next moment NOW.

And

the next NOW.

YES



The Heart Posture of *YES* as *Presence*
connects us to the Sacred Presence of God as Reality,
all that is—always inclusive and complete.
Our hosting presence manifests
the sacred hosting of the Divine.

YES



The Heart Posture of *YES* as *Openness and Wonder*
connects us to
what is both *beyond* and
in all that is—
what is always opening, unnameable,
beyond all things and
yet immanent in the nature of everything—
God as Essence.

YES



The Heart Posture of *YES* as *Love*
intimately connects us to the relatedness of all being,
to our own caring and
to our impulse to create significance
by feeling stronger
about some people and things more than others.
Embracing love is the way
we connect to the sacred aspect of God as Love.

YES



The Heart Posture of *YES* as *Service and Blessing*
consecrates our relationship with God as Creation,
the generative force and capacity
that makes, sustains and destroys.
Creation dynamically vitalizes life,
is ever becoming,
and radiates in all Reality.

YES



The Heart Posture of *YES* as *Growth*
engages us
in continual learning and dedication
as we work to become a vehicle for
God as Wisdom.

YES



A Mindfulness Meditation with Sense of YES

Sitting in a posture of basic dignity, take a deep breath and sigh “Ahhhh” (a vocalized exhalation) as if you were settling into a pleasantly warm bath, letting your shoulders, neck and jaw relax. Pause. Take another deep breath and sigh “Ahhh”, releasing tensions throughout your body. Pause. Take one more deep breath and once again sigh “Ahhhh”, allowing your body to settle into alert stillness.

Simply pause with a sense of *YES*, a sense of the fullness of your presence that embraces all that is.

Now place your attention in your hands. Simply notice the sensations in your hands and as you witness them inwardly allow the core of your being to embrace them with a sense of *YES*. After a short time, you may notice some tingling sensations and pulsing in your hands. Sense the affirmation of this energy of your aliveness as *YES*.

Notice that your breathing is settling into a rhythmic pattern and that you can maintain some of your attention in your hands, while also attending to your breathing.

YES

Notice that you can also hear sounds.

YES

Listen not only with your ears, but also with your whole body.

YES

Listen particularly from the back of the head where the skull and spine meet.

YES

Have a sense of listening to sounds, and to the silence in which the sounds arise.

YES

Notice that thoughts come and go.

YES

Notice feelings as they arise, pass through, and disappear.

YES

Maintain some of your attention in the sensations in your hands and your breath, some in your listening, and some simply witnessing your thoughts and feelings. Experience yourself witnessing and hosting sensations, sounds, silence, thoughts, and feelings.

YES

Host everything that arises in the space of your awareness.

YES

The *YES* of hosting is open, fresh, inclusive and present. Experience yourself as a hosting presence.

YES

Sit quietly with your eyes gently open and defocused, hosting everything that arises and sense *YES* in the core of your being. As you inhale, sense the breath coming into your chest and welcome the world with the sense of *YES*. As you exhale, sense the luminosity of your being and the sense of *YES* radiating from your heart throughout your body and from your body out into the universe. Continue to do this mindfulness breathing with a sense of *YES*. Allow yourself to be just as you are and everything else to be just as it is.

YES

Experience being present now.

YES

Close your meditation with gratitude for all sacred teachings, for those who have kept them alive and passed them on throughout the ages, for your community of love and support, and for the opportunity to do practice. Dedicate the benefits of your practice to the happiness, growth and freedom of all living beings.

YES





COMMON SENSE OF LIFE AS A GIFT AND A RESPONSIBILITY

[Common Sense] is a sensuous knowing, and it springs from what we have in common with the whole of creation. Inherent in our experiences is the realization that we are not separate bodies, but that in this universe, everything is interconnected, all is part of all.

☞ *Brother David Steindl-Rast*

Human society is not an abstraction. The only real society is the complete society of the natural world. We are awkward at this manner of thinking because our religious as well as our humanist traditions carry a certain antagonism toward the natural world. But now the refusal of human beings to become intimate members of the community of the earth is leading to their own destruction.

☞ *Thomas Berry*



Be consciously present in the world,
allow your environment of place, plants, trees,
animals, and people
to inform you about who you are and
where you belong.

YES

And

We are a part of Reality. More specifically, we are
an earthling along with all other parts of the
earth such as the ant, the elephant, the pine, and the lupine.



Life as a gift
is a trust
in which
we are the stewards
of not only our own lives
but of our relationships,
our possessions,
our communities,
the earth, and
the sacred potential
that is in us and in others.
Everything and every moment
is entrusted to us
personally and communally.

YES

And

The attitude that all life, the world, and everything is sacred can support the heart posture of real responsibility. Sacred personalization engages each person, each tree, each flower, each animal as God incarnate.

We want to leave every situation in better shape than we found it. This applies from the great challenges of our society such as poverty, inequality, alienation, fragmentation and lack of community, to the everyday tasks and situations in our homes and families and workplaces.



Common Sense of Compassion

In communion we live in a sacred dimension
beyond the superficial appearance of separation
and struggle.

Through our vitality,
we participate in the aliveness of all life.
Through our love,
we know the Common Sense of interbeing and
interconnectedness.

Using our Common Sense,
we belong, we consecrate,
we contribute, we grow,
we bless and are blessed.

YES

And

Compassion engages our Common Sense
to consciously cultivate caring, identification, and love,
and to conduct ourselves on behalf of others
by giving and receiving.

YES



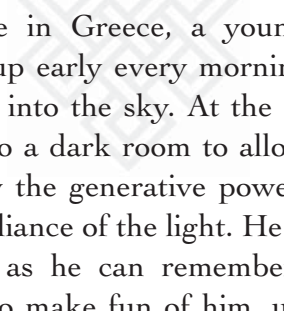
We share with all things,
not a common design
but the fact that we have a design.
Each design is not set
but always in process,
always dynamic,
always changing
as a manifestation
of the nature of creation.

YES

And

Common Sense leads us to realize that we share the reality of dynamic design with everyone and everything we encounter. Myths tell us that the forces operating in, through, and around us are not simply personal, but common, in the sense of both shared and cosmic.





Somewhere in Greece, a young man named Sal gets up early every morning and sings to bring the sun up into the sky. At the end of the day, he withdraws into a dark room to allow the world to rest and to know the generative powers of the dark, as well as the brilliance of the light. He has been doing this for as long as he can remember. Everyone in his village used to make fun of him, until the day he battled a giant python that had been frightening all the farmers and their families as they worked in the fields. The boy, whose connection with the sun gave him the confidence of mighty powers, took a scythe and cut off the python's head with one stroke. He then skinned the great serpent and made boots, a belt, and a special guitar out of the dried hide. As he walked through the village, he played with his new guitar, bringing an entirely new music to his people. He became known as Apollo from then on.

Social workers and psychiatrists from the national government wanted to institutionalize Sal as insane! Thank heavens, the community fought such efforts and every day sang his rising song together in the morning. He had brought rejoicing to the village.

Every year on the anniversary of the snake slaying, he led his village to the sacred spot of the deed and

they made offerings, engaged in various contests and games and played music—all in celebration for the blessings that have come since that time, in honor of their anointed Apollo, and in gratitude of the great snake that gave his life for the transformation of Sal into Apollo, for the awakening of the village, and for the music that is played to this day.

YES



Three heart postures that generate connection and compassion:

Past: Others were our mothers and fathers engenders gratitude;

Present: Others are lovers engenders intimacy and engagement;

Future: Others are our children and we contribute to their well-being

by caring and creating blessings and beauty for their benefit.

YES

And

The communion of Common Sense is a foundation of compassion.

Compassion: com—with, shared, in common;

Passion—emotion, enthusiasm, ardent feeling, struggle/suffering.

deep awareness of the feelings and situation of another coupled with the wish for the happiness of the other

to love together

to identify with others

connecting with others through identifying with them

sensing the experience of others from the inside

empathy for others and desire to help

desire for fairness and justice

sense of interconnectedness, interdependence, and

interbeing
Love your neighbor as yourself
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
Beyond self-concern
A feeling, a state, and a way of being



Appreciative Fluency arises
from the Common Sense
that we live in communion with others.
Our conduct then flows
from this sense of living together.
We understand how
our actions contribute
to the dynamic of the whole.
We engage in virtuous action
when our conduct arises
from the foundation of belonging and
connection and
leads others in creating
an environment of mutual belonging,
of a shared “home.”

YES

And

Common Sense, Compassion, Appreciative Fluency,
the Sacred, and Spiritual Growth all point to
dimensions of being and universes of experience that are
beyond the range of ordinary, superficial perceptions and
forms of understanding. These dimensions are not literal,
but subtle, hidden realities that can only be accessed
through certain sensibilities of trained sacred imagination,
contemplative reflection, attention, presence, and heart
postures of openness, loving embrace, and resilient growth.



When Marcos, a newly minted social worker, arrived in the remote village in rural Peru, he had no experience of the countryside, having grown up in the capital city of Lima and gone to university in Boston. When he was assigned this mission, he was told that the government needed an assessment of the needs of families in rural communities for various services after a particularly severe couple of years of El Niño.

He was greeted immediately in a dialect of Quechua that was totally incomprehensible to him and so he hired a translator who also worked for the local priest. As he walked the small village, he saw a couple of dozen adults and a similar number of children of all ages.

He went to a modest hut and spoke with a middle aged woman who was making bread. He wanted to ask her about her family. He had learned in a sociology course about the *ayllu* which had been defined as a traditional community and governance structure of extended family groups.

When he heard her refer to *ayllu* he asked about how many people were in the extended family.

The translated response was hundreds.

Marco was confused. There could not have been more than sixty people in the village. He proceeded with his questions with doubts about the veracity of the answers.

“Where is your husband?”

“He went to comfort the corn. Our corn cousins are struggling in this drought and many are dying off.”

“Would it help if we brought some bags of corn?”

“It would help us, but not them. We all miss our sister, the river. She was abducted by the invaders in

the higher lands who have big farms and mines.”

“This drought is hard on everyone.”

“We cannot even have conversations with her to support her and she can no longer support us. Our entire family is dependent on each other and the acitivity of *criar y dejarse criar* (nurturing and being nurtured).”

“I can try to arrange to have various aid programs bring water and grain to your village.”

“Yes. You can help us for a while. You cannot return the ways *criar* works for us to generate and regenerate not only our world but our very sense of our lives.”

As Marcos listened to her distress, he had no idea of how to address these tales of family dismemberment that extended beyond human beings. These connections were not included anywhere in social work education except as an individual psychological disorder.



In many smaller, often called indigenous, societies and cultures, the sense of kinship and relationship to others and to the earth is woven into the very fabric of their inner development. For example, the Andean *ayllu* of Peru consists both of a community of related humans and other beings of their particular location, including animals, mountains, streams, rocks and local deities. For the *ayllu* kinship extends to the nonhuman realm. Further, conversation in this culture is directed toward nurturing and being nurtured by nourishing relationships so that the reciprocal growth and development of everybody and everything is a mutual generation and regeneration of the personal and the communal world.

YES





THE ONE AND THE MANY

Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy.

☛ *Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel*

The one truth is the one and the many.

YES

And

We live in a rich world of ambiguity, complexity and paradox. Our challenge and task is to learn how to hold it, relate to it, and grow from and respect it. If we only relate to what we can see then most of life slips past our attention.



We are an essential feature of essential oneness and
a functioning part of an interconnected whole.

YES



A Variation of the Japanese New Year Laughing
Ritual—*Warai*ko: Heartily laugh three times:

once in praise and gratitude for what has gotten
you Here and Now,

once in promise for how you intend to dedicate and
conduct yourself in honor of the gift of the future, and

once with purpose to clear your mind and heart of
reactive habits and addictive routines.

YES

And

To be giddy in Old English meant to be “possessed by
a god or spirit.”



Creation is complete and in process.

YES

And

Life is Not a Problem. It is a Blessing. It is an opportunity. Spiritual work, in its essential core, is not about solving the problems of life and not a self-help program. While the practices will impact us in beneficial ways, they sanctify life as it is, challenges and all. As we consecrate life, we open its precious gift. We are encouraged to recognize our basic wisdom, loving and radiant nature so that we become magnificent contributing participants in our evolving world.



Adam Fine has been walking the world for a very long time, yet on this day he pauses to reflect on a lilac as if for the first time. He notices how the fragrance infiltrates his entire body, how the color decorates the sky, and how it sways to the rhythms of the breeze.

He suddenly speaks the words that cross his mind to no one in particular, as if he had just realized it, "Life can be so sweet, and oh so fleeting."

YES





SPIRITUAL WORK

Presence is the mother of matter,
And Naming is the womb of all distinctions.
With boundless Openness we realize the hidden
core of life.

In passionate Presence we engage manifestations.
Although referred to differently, the core and the
manifest

Are the same in Essence.

Wonder connects to them both:

From wonder into wonder

The gateway to Wisdom opens.

☯ Lao Tsu, *The Way of Life (Tao Te Ching)*

YES



Spiritual work encompasses many sacred purposes:
resting in pure being,
uniting with the totality or Oneness,
holding all the contradictory and complex life forces,
spiritually growing from all life situations,
abiding in an embracing, pervasive sense of home,
cultivating unconditional and boundless love,
becoming absorbed fully in the process of creation,
being fully present,
serving transcendent forces and awarenesses,
healing all sense of separation,
deeply connecting to and honoring all aspects of
Nature,
maturing into a blessing-bestowing being,
redeeming the world through faith, love and justice,
embodying wisdom, love and service, and
expressing wonder at and gratitude for
the miracle and radiance of life.

YES

And

At least three fundamental drives sustain spiritual
work:

drive to be at home in life,
drive to transcend the self and to love,
drive to create and contribute blessings and beauty.



What we know is a reflection of
how we know.
Our connections are a reflection of
how we love.
Our actions are a reflection of
whether we are reactive or
spontaneously conscious and authentic.

YES

And

A sacred view places us not only in the world of space
but in the world of experience and significance.
The inner way of relating to outer space creates a rich inner
space of meaning, beauty, love, and shared value.



“Freedom from” expresses our complaints.

“Freedom to” manifests our aliveness.

YES

And

If we are lucky, sacred work robs us of our makeup, our fine clothes, our possessions, and our accomplishments.

Much of ordinary life feels imprisoned by:

fears
longings
intentions
narcissism
vanities
concepts
reductionism
estrangement
struggle

Our real pursuit is freedom into life:

opening
presencing
connecting
creating
affirming
wondering
engaging
loving
delighting
contributing

YES



A barren wilderness lay before her, a vast land where the hot sun, the hard earth, and hidden water set the stage for the constant battle of all forms of life to survive. This desert had swallowed up visitors from time before memory. Yet it was into this landscape that Irene set out to cross this place where not even camels venture.

She soon lost sight of any cultivated world. Hour after hour and day after day passed as her steps kicked up puffs of fine sand. She thought about turning back but didn't know the way anymore. She continued to move forward without knowing where she was going. The blinding light of the sun obscured the horizon.

Every step hurt. Her sense of time became confused and she had no idea what day it was. She only knew the shivering cold of the night and the fire of the day. She collapsed regularly and was awakened by the sharp shifts from day to night and night to day.

One day—no one knows how many days after she began her quest—some villagers found her curled up on the ground, covered with blisters and seemingly dead.

Under the care of strangers, she slowly came back to life, cell by cell. As her body awakened, nothing was familiar, not even her own image in the mirror. Irene wondered, "Who was it that made that journey and has landed in this unknown land?"

YES



Death in life
leads to viewing life and
the world with fresh eyes,
to listening to the rhythms of the universe
arising from silence,
to sensing the touch of vitality.

YES



As a blessing-bestowing being,
through our attention
we want to make people feel
that they are being personally
addressed by the sacred.

YES

And

If we look upon everything we do, everyone we know,
and everything we see as sacred, as expressions of the
Divine, then life transforms into a sacred life. To see, know
and listen in a sacred way requires that we personalize our
relationship to a tree, a plant, the ground, experiencing the
divine through that relationship.



We must earn it to learn it.

YES

And

The Latin root of the word “suffer” is *sufferentia*—endurance.



Prayer is the art of sacred imagining from the heart.

YES

And

We are a conduit for sacred wisdom and energy
when we channel and align these in our conduct.
To live as a conduit for the sacred in this way is to create a
virtue directed life.



The *sacred* is a dimension of life.
It is self-surpassing,
an all-encompassing and
interpenetrating unity and presence —
both beyond and immanent.

YES

And

The *sacred*, in the way we are using the word here, does not have a separate and distinct existence from life. The *sacred* integrates all that is, all contradictions, and all possibilities. The way into the sacred is not by escaping existence but by going further and further into life, into the mystery, into experience, into awareness, into love, into creating each moment personally and communally.

While the particular experiences we have in spiritual practice and sacred moments will be unique and vary from person to person and from time to time, the effect of these experiences is common. These experiences tend to take us deeper into our felt sense of the sacred, give us a sense of greater connection and belonging beyond ourselves, and enhance our sense of purpose in life.



The YES of wonderment
opens the sacred paradoxical
mystery of Reality.
In wonder, we sense
both the beyond
and the immanent in all things.

YES

And

Spirituality transcends the ordinary and yet, paradoxically, it can be found in the ordinary. It places *what is* and *beyond together*. It is the extraordinary nature of all that is ordinary. It is also true that by attending to *what is*, the *beyond* can be touched.

To live a spiritual life is to be inspired by and embody the qualities of the sacred that are beyond a life centered in material reality and yet is not divorced from physical reality. It is to be informed by a sacred way of seeing, feeling, being and acting. Spirituality involves both the affirmation of what is as well as what is beyond—what we can know and what is unknown and beyond our comprehension.

As a form of experience and certainly as a way of being, the sacred is like a shy lover who must be courted by the earnestness of our efforts, the dedication in our purpose, and the magnificence of our failures. We may get encouraging glimpses of the beauty, peace, and wonder of this hidden lover that inspire us to continue with our practices day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. As all this work begins to bear fruit, the beauty of the sacred is revealed and experienced increasingly as an integral part of life as we engage in the continual process of sacralization.



The gateway of the spiritual opens us
to the true abundance,
to the boundless treasures of the sacred.

Spiritual work employs
a sacred heart posture
that points beyond:
beyond the superficial,
beyond the ordinary,
beyond possessions,
beyond feelings,
beyond thoughts,
beyond expectations and
beyond self-concern.

In this way, spiritual practice opens us
to true abundance,
the boundless treasures of the sacred.

YES

And

In the sacred dimension of pure being, we abide in the nature of being. In the sacred dimension of becoming, we continuously go beyond the limits of where we have been, renewing ourselves in an eternal presence and opening to the unknown. By recognizing and participating in the interactive, interconnective nature of life, we contribute to the sacred nature of creation.



Spiritual qualities are enlarged
as they are shared.
It is in this sacred space of
shared creation and intimacy
that everyone can experience wealth.

YES

And

Sacred ritual affirms that the life force is not personal and is part of a larger context. When we align ourselves and work with the forces of the larger context, we create a dynamic that is both transcendent and transformative. Bridging the ordinary and the extraordinary, we enter the world of creation. When we conceive of life and the world as fundamentally movement rather than form, creation and transformation become a natural part of the process of life.



Presence is open and this very openness is Presence.
Whatever is opening is presencing and
Whatever is presencing is opening.

YES

And

The famous Buddhist text the *Heart of Profound Wisdom Sutra* (commonly known as the *Heart Sutra*) addresses both the open, empty, and impermanent nature of all phenomena and the presencing nature of all manifestation.



Imagination can transport us
beyond ourselves
into worlds that transmit
entirely new possibilities.

YES

And

The great capacities of being human reside not simply in our ability to reason and become conscious. For example, mathematics, an imaginary human creation, reveals relationships and dynamics in the physical world that bring both insight and creative possibilities. Mythology often unravels mysteries of human experience and development connecting our personal story to larger contexts and shared experiences through time.

A reason for symbolic deities is so cosmic forces are represented without us needing to elevate people to exalted, depersonalized positions where we lose their humanity, their humanness.



A deity that takes up residence
in our imagination
achieves life in so far as
we make it our deity.

YES

And

Each deity embodies the principles that reveal aspects of potential wisdom and ways of being. Identifying with a deity organizes our heart posture, animates our conduct, and places us in a sacred world. Then this deity becomes a guide in navigating through our inner experience, life in the outer world and our shared participation in the universe of the sacred.

The radiance of this deity has the power to transform our core fears and our reactive habit body into a blessing-bestowing body of wisdom and love.



Life poses three questions to each of us personally
and all of us communally in every situation.

What is the meaning we choose to make from it?

What relationship do we choose to have to the
situation? and

What response do we choose to make?

YES



Our answers to these three questions form the basis for our engagement in the three alchemies:

Alchemy of Mind—transforming experience into gold of wisdom.

Alchemy of Heart—transforming emotions into gold of love and compassion

Alchemy of Creation—transforming “what is” into the gold of blessings.

YES



Become a conscious creator.
Sacralize and be sacralized.
Sanctify and be sanctified.
Bless and be blessed.
Work and be worked.
From being gifted, pass it on through giving.

YES

And

The blessing of NOW, intensifies the vitality and immediacy of the present. At the same time, we, with the sense of being blessed, are grateful for the past that is the foundation of the present. With our intention to be a blessing, we set the stage for the future. In our richly endowed and faceted world, full of variation and unknown, blessings are found everywhere if only we have a mindset and heartspace of sanctification and the willingness to give them form to be passed on.

Blessing: Something conducive to happiness or welfare, to make sacred—*Bless, blessing as verb*: To make holy, to sanctify, to sacralize, to endow. *Blessing as noun*: A benefit, something promoting or contributing to happiness, well-being. From the Old English words *blaedsian, bledsian, bletsian* meaning to bless, wish happiness, and consecrate. Indo-European root: *bhel-* to bloom, thrive. Related words using this same root: bloom, blossom, flower, bleed and blood.



In the land of the underworld, where the dead are transformed into fertile nourishment for life, a contest seemed to be going on. The contestants thought that they needed to demonstrate how the legacy of their work was worthy of redeeming the world in a time of crisis. As they clamored for the light of attention of the living, many sought agents to brand their phrases, their images, their melodies, their handiwork, and their ideas. None realized that there are no winners and losers—that all works are ingredients in the recipe that is constantly being cooked to feed the immense appetite of Now.

YES



Our present actions create
the womb of the future.
Responsibility means to create blessings
in the form of benefit and beauty from what is.

YES

And

To open the gift of life, we take responsibility for that gift. Responsibility from a spiritual standpoint means creating blessings in the form of benefit and beauty from what is. It is not spiritually relevant how the conditions of life got to be as they are. What is significant now is what are we going to do that will create value from the situation.



Useful reflections for a dedicated life:
Create a narrative of growth and maturity.
What have I learned in my soul as wisdom about
life, the world and the sacred, beyond information
and my emotional reactions?
What is my emerging vision?
What do I want my presence, my contributions,
and my relationships to be about?
How do I choose to share the gift of life in ways
that pass on that gift?

YES



The nature of a spiritual life is to live beyond the tension of opposites.

YES

And

If you want to enter an authentic spiritual reflection, let the fears, cravings and losses of your life hollow your heart and invade your mind with unanswerable questions. Live in the questions. Hold them in your being. Then you can move between each side of a sacred conversation. As Robert Frost said: God himself cannot make a stick without two ends.



The imagination has the capacity
to take in a horizon of meaning
that threatens to dwarf us,
to render us speechless, and
to turn day into night.

At the same time,
imagining beyond comprehension is a path to mystery —
to what is unnamable, impenetrable,
beyond words, gestures, faith, and practice.

YES



The purpose of a human life
is to refine and grow
the soul in all its potential,
in our personal lives and in our communities.

It is to make our unique contribution
to the evolution of
our families, communities, humankind, and the planet
as we mature from a Personal Soul into a Sacred Soul.

YES



The purpose of virtue is to
release, reveal, and grow
the soul in
wisdom, love and conduct.

YES

And

To pursue what we love, we have to give up what we want.





GRATITUDE AND PASSING ON BLESSINGS

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours, no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which to look out with
Christ's compassion to the world;

Yours are the feet with which he is to go about
doing good;

Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men
now.

 *St. Teresa of Avila*



Gratitude turns what we have into enough, a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.

Gratitude transforms our relationship to our past, warms the heart today, and opens possibilities for tomorrow.

Gratitude cultivates love, expanded awareness, and dedication to passing benefits on.

Gratitude creates bonds between giver and thanksgiver.

Gratitude enlarges our Common Sense.

Gratitude is a *YES* to belonging.

YES



Creation governs life,
consciousness governs the mind and
connection governs the heart.

YES

And

Creation is another way of framing the Buddhist teaching on impermanence. The process of creation is constant and continuous.

The creative aspect of sacred work denotes, not an idea of goodness, but a living caring; not an abstract example, but an ongoing challenge to live from a sacred sensibility; not mere feeling or affection, but a heart posture composed of mature spiritual elements; no detached survey of the state of the world, but a passionate summons to engage with equanimity, love and compassion.



The mature forms of three-fold reality
are reflected in our capacities for
wisdom, love and beauty.

YES

And

The threefold nature of reality, found in most religious traditions, can be expressed generically as space, relationship and activity. Namely that everything that exists, exists in space, is in relationship to everything else, and is dynamic as an energetic process that changes over time.

We know these natures in terms of our capacities for consciousness that encompasses life in our awareness, intimacy in our connection to others, and creation in our growth and contributions to the world.



The recognition and realization of
The open, undifferentiated, and formless
dimension of being
is the basis of sacred wisdom.

The experience and realization of
pervasive interconnectedness and interbeing
is the basis of sacred love and compassion.

The integration and cultivation of
the spiritual qualities and energies of life
both personally and communally,
is the basis of sacred character, conduct and beauty.

YES

And

The spiritual work of the triune Buddha might be thought of as the triple cultivation of mind, love, and conduct. The triune Buddha includes the Wisdom Buddha, the Intimate Buddha, and the Creative Buddha.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the qualities of a Buddha are often depicted in terms of three enlightened beings—Manjushri manifesting wisdom, Avalokiteshvara manifesting all-encompassing love and compassion, and Vajrapani manifesting the all accomplishing power to create benefit. These three symbolize the triune principles of the Buddha's nature as they can be cultivated and applied in our lives.

Similar triune principles are found in other traditions as well. For example in Hinduism, the triunity of goddesses include Sarasvati representing wisdom, Lakshmi

representing love, and Parvati representing the energy of creation, which includes the full process of creation from generation, sustaining, to dissolution. We find similar trinitarian perspectives in other traditions, including Christianity and Islam.



What we do in this moment
shapes not only our present experience
but what we are becoming.

YES

And

YES as the Heart Posture of Celebration Consecrates.
By offering our presence, our love, and our creations,
we nurture the world of meaning and value. Through YES
as Celebration, we inhabit ways of being where colors are
brighter, sounds resonate throughout our body, waves of
vital energy awaken us, and the fabric of our connection to
the sacred is unceasingly woven and rewoven.

YES amplifies our natural impulse to dance with joy,
bow in gratitude, raise arms in praise, pause in wonder, and
commune with the larger Presence of a Sacred world.

YES takes us beyond self-concerns to the Sacred World
of Creation. Through YES as Celebration, we perceive, relate,
experience, and sanctify the continuous dynamic of life. In
this way we express our belonging in the world and our basic
dignity.

YES affirms Divine Creation manifesting through us as
we join the dance of life and are danced by life itself. Greater
forces take over and flow through us when we open our
hearts with gratitude, love, and a sense of serving what is
greater than ourselves.

Celebration fills our hearts, our minds, our bodies, our homes, and our communities with *YES* as the affirmation of life, even as we transcend the superficial by taking flight on the wings of this sacred moment.



To praise is to become a lover.

YES

And

Praise is the Heart Posture of Applause. All love is a form of praise through our willingness to open, be touched, appreciate and embrace a large dose of joy. To love is to wholeheartedly radiate the energy of value. Lovemaking in various forms employs praise as an alchemical art to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary and to remake our body of reactive habits into a sacred body of delight, wisdom, and blessing-bestowing energy.



Sacred rituals consecrate
meaning and relationships
by weaving the fragments of our lives
into threads that connect
the seen and unseen,
the personal and the communal,
the mundane and the spiritual, and
the earthly and the transcendent.

YES

And

Rituals bring all the elements of celebration and service to the Sacred together. The word “ritual” derives from *ritus*, Latin for “to fit together.”

Rituals align us with the Sacred to give direction to our work, our relationships, and our growth. They bind the regularity of communal performance with the spontaneous heart affirmations of each participant.



Our service in the world
begins with being
a hosting presence.

YES

And

The Indo-European root of the word “host” is *ghosti*, which is also the root for the words “guest” and “stranger.” Being a host, guest and stranger comes with the responsibility for reciprocal hospitality.

As a host, we welcome and include others into the home in our heart, as well as our physical space. We nourish them, share with them, make connection, and engage them in a mutual dance of conversation, learning and growing. Together we create a mutual sense of belonging and shared sacred presence.



We are the environment
that others experience.

YES

And

Others include not only people. All living beings,
all of nature, are embraced in our welcoming,
awakening, and supportive presence.



The *YES* of Responsibility
directs us to create
blessings, benefit and beauty
from what is,
no matter how it got that way.

YES

And

Blame, guilt, regret, resentment, grudges, and
laments keep us imprisoned in our self-centered
reactive habit body and neither help us grow nor improve
the world.



The soul is

a lover of life as a way of embracing Reality;

a lover of being as a way of opening and
delighting in Essence;

a lover of becoming, growing, manifesting,
creating beauty, and performing conduct that is
blessing-bestowing as a way of expressing Creation;
and

a lover of consciousness, learning, and paradox
as a way of integrating all the faces of the sacred in
Wisdom.

YES



Vitality manifests the love of life.

Interest brings love into focus.

Intention directs us toward loving caring.

Worship elevates through love.

Meaning emerges from our connections
to people, experiences, places, and things
as we invest them with loving significance
creating a world of importance and kinship.

YES

And

To be ignorant of love's embrace is to be bird without wings



Love your neighbor as yourself.

YES

And

This does not mean love your neighbor as you love yourself. It means that your neighbor is a feature or part of yourself and that we are not separate.



To love God is first
to love God as other,
then God as within self and other,
then knowing God is love itself, and
finally to be love.

YES





DEDICATION AND VIRTUE

The key to making our lives enduring structures of the Sacred is dedication.

YES

And

Building on the foundation of life as a sacred gift, we open this gift through consecrating, cultivating, communing, and conducting ourselves as carriers and contributors to the lineage of a larger sacred culture.

In freeing ourselves from the grip of reactive habits and confusions, we engage and celebrate life as a flowing, vibrant, loving and ever-emerging Presence. This vision of our participation becomes the inspiration and motivation for our dedication. Dedication places our efforts in the context of the larger story of humanity and the earth. Our conduct becomes an offering that extends the blessings of our contributions not only to the others we know but also to others we will never know as these blessings are passed on.

Sacred dedication honors not only the gift of life; it honors the magnificence of the world and the intimacy of family, friends, community and nature. We bring the qualities and energies from our spiritual life into the world through our

relationships, our work, and our participation in community. We operate from a vision of a world of happiness, growth, and freedom. We transform tasks from burdens into sacred rites. We act from alignment with nature as we access and utilize our creative essence, experiencing freshness, joy and gratitude in creating an endless stream of blessings.



Closing blessing of dedication for meditation practice:

*We are grateful
for the teachings, our teachers,
our community and the opportunity to practice,
and dedicate the benefits of this practice
to the happiness, growth and freedom
of all living beings.*

YES

And

The closing blessing of dedication begins with gratitude and then indicates the qualities and energies that we want to pass on:

And

Happiness: particularly the sense of home and the satisfaction of contributing,

And

Growth: in the sense of expanding, sharing, creating, and maturing

And

Freedom: to create blessings, to relate to everything as an opportunity to manifest wisdom, love, and radiance, to see possibilities, and to open to the gift of each moment.



Through dedication
we personally mature character and
communally evolve culture.

YES

And

A*reté* (an ancient Greek word for virtue and excellence) can guide us in growing through the challenges of life as we participate in the evolution of an enlightened and supportive culture.



Four virtues stand out in a mature character.
Virtue of living with and in the unknown.
Virtue of living in the questions more than the answers.
Virtue of resting in the natures of heart, mind and creation.
Virtue of creating blessings in this moment, beyond the contraction of the past.

YES

And

Living in the unknown and questions keeps us open, more inclusive of tensions and paradox, directs our attention, and gets us to live with the temporary answers that change with experiences as conduct creates experience and new dynamics.



We are stillness and action simultaneously.
We are silence and speech simultaneously.
We are context and content simultaneously.
We are unity and multiplicity simultaneously.

YES

And

As we mature, our habits of mind shift from frames of confusion, conflict and complication, to the frame of clarity as presence with what is, completeness and inclusion of everything, even paradox, as the richness of the world.





TRANSMITTING TEACHING THROUGH STORY

It can take a thousand voices to tell a story well.

☛ *Native American Saying*

Personal and communal stories
are more than simply stories.
They orient us in life and
shape the kind of sacred relationship we have
with life itself.

YES

And

As David Loy points out, the world is made of stories. Stories include more than narratives. All ideas are a form of story. All memory is a story. By even articulating an experience, we create a story. All understandings are forms of stories about what we think we know. Theories and concepts are stories that we generate to explain and take action in the world. Stories in certain ways tell us who we are, how we fit, what is valuable, how we should conduct ourselves, and what options and possibilities we have.

Stories help us relate and give direction to our lives. Everything you are reading is a form of story. There are stories that imprison us in reactive, limiting, and stagnant identities, such as stories of our greatness and brilliant accomplishments and stories of our woundedness and history of victimization. Stories of maturing show how we have grown from challenging experiences and reveal our spiritual possibilities and paths.



Stories feed our souls
just as food feeds our bodies.
The stories we choose to animate
shape our lives.
Conducive stories nurture
our growth into a blessing-bestowing being.

YES

And

There are clearly junk stories that may be entertaining but keep us passive, reactive, stuck in a dissatisfying life, and escapist. And there are nourishing stories that awaken us, encourage more intimacy with life, and inspire a fuller engagement with the challenges of growing into a better human being. There are stories that diminish our world to a domain of self-enclosed feelings and then there are stories that open us to a wider world of wonder and adventure

Reflecting on the stories we are living reveals whether we are fortified within fear, overwhelm, numbness, hostility, distrust, and dissatisfaction or on a path of aliveness, virtue, heroism, love, inclusion, and service. Does our story tend to direct our attention toward the past or toward the present and the future? Is our story one of burden or blessing? Is the story we are living worth dying for?

Many complex stories such as many ancient myths are meaningful in multiple ways, having application to the stages of life, the dynamics of relationship, and the challenges of bringing wisdom, love and blessings to a community.

Simplistic concepts and doctrines tend to be superficial stories, lacking nuance and complexity. Since every story takes a point of view, the way beyond a superficial and limiting perspective is to take other perspectives. When we do this, we are re-storying the world in a new way.



Create shared meanings
and foster mutual conversation.

YES



We are challenged to weave our personal stories into communal narratives that create powerful shared meanings and nourish a mutual conversation so that we all can redirect and enrich our impoverished cultural paradigms.

The shared stories of the culture we grow up in and participate in tend to shape our personal stories in terms of focus of attention, meaning, value, and ways of relating to the world. In a narcissistic and highly individualized society, we can become preoccupied with our personal story. When we only tell our own story, we hear only ourselves talking. We are outside of real conversation, outside ourselves, outside of genuine relationship and outside of learning and wisdom, even as we have the illusion of being on the inside. To authentically be on the inside, we need to listen to the stories of others and share those parts of our story that contribute to the mutual conversation.



As sacred storytellers,
we begin with a mindful heart
that sees beyond the surface.

In creating shared stories,
we invest everything
with both personal meaning
and communal significance.

YES

And

Pay attention to the shared stories that conduce to real wisdom rather than those that tantalize the imagination into the trivial tendencies of our culture or catchy, but simplistic, sayings. While we can intellectualize anything through the lens of concepts, or psychologize and emotionalize through feelings, we share sacred stories from the heart posture of self-surpassing love and mystery and thereby sanctify everything. Seeing and speaking in this way, the environment Now becomes the womb of a sacred future.





MATURITY

To go on the grand tour,
a man must be free of self-necessity.

☞ *Patrick Kavanagh*

Groucho Marx asked a radiant 96-year old woman what was her secret for happiness. She responded “there is no happiness, so I just have to be happy without it.”



It is said that
being “absent”
is a condition of
being present.

YES



Spiritual embodiment involves *theosis* —
transformation of our physical, mental and
emotional body
into a spiritual body.

YES

And

We are transforming beings with various digestive
systems. We digest and transform food into
energy, energy into qualities of aliveness, information into
understanding, emotions into connection, and identity
crises into spiritual growth.



What matures us?
Experience
Questions
Practice
Consciousness
Caring
Contribution
Surrender

YES



Spiritual maturity involves
giving gifts and blessings
that we have never received.

YES



Four Ennobling Challenges—A Frame for the “Four Noble Truths” of Buddhism:

1. To open to and be present with all experiences of life, including the inevitable pains.
2. To host in our awareness experience and to perceive how suffering arises.
3. To hold and transform everyday experience, including pain, by not feeding negative attitudes about it and by channeling its energy into creating a blessing.
4. To cultivate this ennobling path in our conduct in the world by living a dedicated life.

YES

And

What we think is the burden of our problem is really the weight of our gift on the path of maturity.

We do not have real control over what happens. Our efforts at control can pollute our relationships as we try to mimic power. We do not have to source all strength, we need to invite it in. In many ways, growing throughout our lives is a collaborative effort.



In life, as in theater,
playing our role well
contributes real value,
not having the “best” role.

As an actor
in both life and a play,
good acting derives from seeing our role
as creating a larger story
for the benefit of all.

YES



We are all slaves to ourselves.

☞ *Micah Lowenthal*

YES

And

This statement has two interpretations: 1) we are slaves to our habits and 2) we are slaves to self-preoccupation.

When we do not deal with the sense of exile—when the inner and outer are divorced and when we seek connection and home in superficial ways and places—we go unconscious and become prone to feelings of dissatisfaction, spiritual hopelessness, helplessness, hostility, hunger, horror, and hatred—hell.

When we get a hit of reactive core fear identity, we want to have a drink, eat sweets, have sex, narcissistically comfort ourselves with superficial and temporary pleasure or lose ourselves in the fanatical service to an idea, a group, another person, or a cause.

Every hit of reactive identity is an invitation to become conscious and to move through the emotional emptiness to become present in life with fullness.



Do meditation
as an expression of your enlightenment,
as an offering of your thanksgiving,
as a celebration of your wisdom nature
and your loving and beautiful soul.

YES

And

Our dedication is to make wonder, gratitude, and service indistinguishable from the way we live our lives.

The paradox of dedicated practice includes the playfulness of a free spirit alongside a determined self-discipline, and a vast capacity for solitude and silence while always being connected and delighted with friends and fellow journeyers.

It is only by holding all these qualities, in varying proportions, that we experience full integrity and engagement.



The Purposes of Practices

Celebrate and Consecrate Life

Build character in terms of virtue and conduct

Realize and embody wisdom as a sage

Develop a Heart Posture of Love and Compassion

Bestow Blessings—improve the lives of people as a healer, servant, teacher, and friend and serve nature as a steward

Create a just and supportive social, economic, political and ecological system as a spiritual warrior

YES

And

What keeps all these purposes and related roles grounded is the wisdom of paradox, the love of all life as oneself, and the willingness to resiliently grow and contribute in meeting the challenges of uncaring and overwhelming systems and events.



When you, in a glimpse,
see the secret with the eyes of your heart,
you become the secret.
Only your eyes see it in that moment.

YES



There are many stories of how Persephone became a queen. A muse told me this secret version after I had plied her with intoxicating praise.

As you probably know, Persephone was the daughter of the union of Zeus and his sister Demeter, the goddess of the earth and the harvest. We must remember that interfamilial sexual relationships were critical to creating the forces of the world out of primal chaos and conveyed the intimate interconnection of the dynamics of life, death, and love.

Now, as Persephone grew in beauty, Demeter kept a close eye on her and always wanted her near. In fact, it was said around Olympus that Demeter was too close to her budding daughter. Persephone began to feel smothered by the entanglements with her mother and the constant attention. She secretly longed to exercise her own powers and find her own domain.

One day, as Demeter's attention was distracted by Hera, her sister and sister-in-law, Persephone was left alone to wander in the heavenly garden. A narcissus caught her eye and she picked it. As she pulled on it, a great rift opened in the earth and Hades appeared in all his dazzling glory with great curling locks and flowing beard.

Hades, whose name means "unseen," and, according to Socrates, probably also referred to "one who is knowledgeable about all noble things." Hades was also said to be the guardian of the treasures of fertility. This sovereign of the underworld, brother of Zeus, Hera and Demeter, had reigned for ages without a queen. Some have said the Zeus and Hera had promised him a bride, but who she would be no one knew for certain.

In any case, Hades took one look at the maiden, fell in love and decided to take this opportunity to court the beautiful Persephone. Her heart skipped many beats as she marveled at the magnificence of her suitor. She was also drawn by the prospect of emerging from under the wing of her overbearing mother. On top of it all, he offered her the opportunity to become a queen in her own right. So off they went to his domain in the underworld.

Demeter soon began searching for her daughter, wondering what could have happened. After days of searching, she was able to piece together from various accounts that Persephone was now in the underworld with Hades. From her motherly point of view, this could only have happened if Hades had abducted her daughter who, as she saw it, was devoted to her mother.

She proceeded to spread rumors of abduction and rape around Olympus. She also approached Zeus and Hera to intervene. Zeus declined to act but said he would talk with their brother.

Meanwhile Persephone quickly had doubts about her impulsive decision to go with Hades. She was not used to the underworld and living among the dead. She missed the world of light and blossoming that was so much a part of her nature. Needless to say, she and Hades had a lot to work out as they tried to share a life and governance of their world together.

Over time Persephone grew depressed and would not eat. Hades knew that Demeter, his sister, was furious with him and was defaming him with anyone who would listen. He spoke with his brother, who suggested that Persephone be encouraged to come

to the upper world to see her mother, who was also depressed. And so it was arranged.

Persephone was joyous and radiant as she emerged into the world of the sun. She brought with her an entourage of shoots and buds that filled the earth.

When Demeter reunited with her daughter, she tried to convince her to stay. Persephone embraced her mother lovingly and then held her at arms' length.

She knew in that moment she needed to return to Hades and her domain of the underworld where she had tasted the deliciousness of sovereignty and the responsibility of serving the larger order of life. She also knew that she needed to honor both sides of her nature by caretaking what has died and bringing new life to the world each year.

So she reigned in the underworld with her husband Hades and brought life with her upon her ascent. Her annual transits repaired the tears in the family fabric of the Olympians.

YES

And

So she lives on as a mysterious force in the Universe, a goddess of darkness and of light, of death and of life, of descent and of ascent, of the treasures of two worlds, and of the multiple natures of all life.

YES



In addition to making our lives a blessing,
we dedicate our dying and death.
Every death is sacred,
a sacrifice on behalf of life and
the larger story of which we play a part.

YES



Sacred Dedications:

May whatever suffering I experience in dying serve to connect to and relieve the suffering of others who are similarly in pain.

YES

May my death serve so others can live, and so they may die in peace with clarity, love and meaning.

YES

May my death be a blessing for the world.

YES

May all blessings continue to be passed on for the continual evolution of life on earth.

YES





THE DEDICATED LIFE INSTITUTE (DLI) supports spiritual exploration and growth and is dedicated to making the essence teachings of many traditions accessible in a Western idiom. Incorporating the principles of the mystic way, we promote both recovery of our wisdom ground of being and development of our capacity to use our daily conditions as a means of growth and the opportunity to manifest our true wisdom, loving and creative nature. Our dedication to living as an expression of wisdom and love serves to encourage both personal and communal transformation. The Institute offers meditation groups, retreats, workshops, and a home study program. For more information please visit our website at www.dli.org.





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In addition to creating and teaching trainings, workshops and retreats internationally, he serves as pastoral counselor, consultant, and writer. He has been on the faculty of Boston College and Harvard University Extension and has studied with Buddhist and Taoist masters for more than forty-five years.

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