

**Meditation:**

Please prepare me to be a sanctuary...

Centering in, eyes closed or softly gazing just in front of you, focus your attention on your breath... simply noticing the rhythm of your inhale and exhale, and knowing that within just a few breaths our individual breath rhythm in and out will entrain with each other, reminding us of our interconnectedness...

Sense your body supported, grounding in by noticing the physical sensation of where your body is touching where you sit, letting your hands come to rest over your heart...

Bring to mind a sanctuary place in your life where you feel safe, that is a refuge... maybe a room or favorite chair in your own home, or simply sitting anywhere with a dear friend or loved one, or with a more than human 4 legged friend... maybe it is a special place in nature

Now bring your attention back to your hands, resting over your heart, and begin to sense the sanctuary of this deepest place within you, home of your unrepeatable divine spark...

WE ARE SANCTUARY...

**Message:**

Our assignment has not changed.

My fuzzy directions when explaining assignments as a teacher led to a room full of middle or high school students with puzzled faces or blank looks! So I'd take a deep breath, and start over. 😊

What is our assignment? We actually have pretty clear and simple directions in our assignment:

- Love God/Life/Source/Spirit with our whole mind, heart, soul and strength (body!)
- Love our neighbors AS ourselves. Which also means we must love ourselves...
- Love your enemies. Practice forgiveness (70x 7)
- Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Comfort those who mourn. "Whatsoever you do the least of these, you do to me."

- Love one another and ease suffering

Paul Ferrini in *The Keys to the Kingdom* writes:

“Beneath the surface of life, there is a spring that runs deep. There is a capacity for love that each of us has that is completely awesome and miraculous. The great ones like Jesus and Buddha have shown it to us. The same spring that nurtured them runs in our hearts...You and I are here to love. It is our purpose and our destiny...

Our assignment has not changed!

Ferrini again:

“Love begins and ends in our own consciousness. It flows through us to others and back to us again. If we do not offer love to ourselves, we cannot give it to others...You cannot be disconnected from love, yet you can be completely unaware of the love that lives inside you. You are part of the great flow of life that transcends your ego consciousness and connects you to all that is.

As you sit in your safe space, content to be who you are, breathing and exchanging love with all that is, you come to the revelation that your essence is love. Love is who you are. You cannot be anything else. When you accept this amazing truth about you, your life begins to transform. You begin to realize that every encounter is a holy one. Every action and word spoken is an opportunity to give or receive love. You no longer live on the banks of the river, but in the river itself. Love flows through you wherever you go, whatever you do. “

Come back, if you will, to placing your hands over your heart, the sanctuary that you ARE and breathe into that space with self-awareness, self-compassion, self-acceptance.

On this fifth and final Sunday of Lent:

- How are you doing in the assignment of nurturing and listening to the sanctuary of your heart?
- How are you “repenting,” that is, returning to the home of your heart, where you dwell in the Love that you *are*?
- Are you more aware today of how you are caring for your Spirit?
- Have you come to the revelation that your essence is Love?
- And how has that revelation then called you to let love flow through you in every action and word spoken?

Thich Nhat Hanh played a central role in the Buddhist movement for peace in Vietnam during the 1960s. In 1969 he wrote,

“The essence of nonviolence is love. Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics, and techniques for non-violent struggle arise naturally. Nonviolence is not a dogma; it is a process. Other struggles may be fueled by greed, hatred, fear, or ignorance, but a non-violent one cannot use such blind sources of energy, for they will destroy those involved and also the struggle itself. Non-violent action born of the awareness of suffering and nurtured by love, is the most effective way to confront adversity.

At one point,] people brought their family altars– the most sacred objects in their– onto the streets, relying on their culture and tradition to oppose the forces of destruction. Some people were critical, saying they used religion for political purposes, but I do not agree. They were using their most potent spiritual force to directly confront the violence. This was not a political act; it was an act of love.”

I’ve been contemplating the meaning of the words PROTEST, RESISTANCE, and PRESENCE. How do we turn what is seemingly a political act into an act of love? What wisdom can I find in these words that may lead to actions, if I bring them first into the river of love? Part of my musing is born of the 12 step wisdom that what we resist persists! There is PLENTY happening around me that I don’t want to see persist!

Yesterday... Beloved is where we begin... accepting that I felt compelled to be part of the rally happening in Albany, felt called to be the support for my parents who also felt called to show up, along with four other octogenarian peace warriors, one an 88 year nun who brought along her companion in community, a 97 year old nun– all of us called by love to be part of this event. All of us from our community who gathered here first-called to begin with prayer. *Beloved is where we begin*. This was an assignment of showing up *AS presence, AS love*, for those called to so in this way, despite rain, wind and cold.

I’m not here to tell you how YOU are called. I am only here to remind all of US that we are called to do what Jesus did. What did Jesus do? He prayed. He loved. He taught us to love “the least of these.” He surrendered to his soul’s purpose, and continues to show us the way to surrender to our soul’s purpose. He reminds that even “those people” are God’s beloveds. Beloved is where we begin...

WE are called to pray without ceasing, to let *everything* reveal the divine, to let *everything* reveal the LOVE that we are. We are called too, not to ignore the suffering we

see around us, but to bring our love to all words, all actions, all presence. And so here in closing is the prayer that calls to me.

### **Beloved Is Where We Begin**

—Jan Richardson

from Circle of Grace

If you would enter  
into the wilderness,  
do not begin  
without a blessing.

Do not leave

without hearing  
who you are:  
Beloved,  
named by the One  
who has traveled this path  
before you.

Do not go  
without letting it echo  
in your ears,  
and if you find  
it is hard  
to let it into your heart,  
do not despair.  
That is what  
this journey is for.

I cannot promise  
this blessing will free you  
from danger,  
from fear,  
from hunger  
or thirst,

from the scorching  
of sun  
or the fall  
of the night.  
But I can tell you  
that on this path  
there will be help.

I can tell you  
that on this way  
there will be rest.

I can tell you  
that you will know  
the strange graces  
that come to our aid  
only on a road  
such as this,  
that fly to meet us  
bearing comfort  
and strength,  
that come alongside us  
for no other cause  
than to lean themselves  
toward our ear  
and with their  
curious insistence  
whisper our name:

Beloved.

Beloved.

Beloved.

*And so it is. Amen.*