

The School of the Natural Order, Inc.
P. O. Box 150
Baker, NV 89311
Christmas 2009



*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, Light;
And where there is sadness, joy.*

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

—St. Francis of Assisi

I was introduced to St. Francis of Assisi, his life and work, when I was a freshman in high school. Our choir often sang this prayer as a hymn. It has played in my memory and resonated in my being all these years. When we were asked to consider "peace" for our offering this year, I knew at once what I wanted to share. What can I say about something held so dear for so many years? What does it mean to me? How can I explain that meaning to others? First, my referents for the words "Lord, Divine Master, dying, eternal life," have certainly changed. They're not "out there." "The I am, which is my True Self, is the Power..." But mostly today I am struck with the activity that is required to become an instrument of peace: let me sow,... seek to be,... giving ... pardoning.... I don't ask to be given peace, I work to become an instrument of peace.

May the peace and the Power of the Infinite Spirit, which passes all understanding, hold us and keep us in the love of the Christed Consciousness, while we are seemingly separated, one from another.

*Blessings to all,
Val Taylor, 2009*

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When I arrived at Home Farm in 1976, everything was unfamiliar to me—the teachings, the people in the group, even the routines of daily living, and I encountered many personal challenges in this new situation. When something happened that upset me, or when someone said or did something 'to me' that I did not like, my immediate response was to go visit Anita, and talk things over with her.

"When someone offers you a gift and you do not accept it, whose gift is it?" she would ask me. I must have heard that response at least fifty times. It seems such a simple approach, and yet the simplicity is deceiving. Great power and serenity reside in this approach.

Kent Keith, in his book *Anyway: The Paradoxical Commandments*, lists ten precepts for finding meaning and peace in our daily lives. Variations on the theme of not accepting others' gifts, they provide a wonderful support for equanimity and fulfillment.

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered.

Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.

Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.

Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds.

Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.

Fight for a few underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.

Build anyway.

People really need help, but may attack you if you do help them.

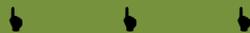
Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.

Give the world the best you have anyway.

May 2010 bring fulfillment and peace to all.

—Susan Wetmore, 2009



Jo's sense of peace

When my mind first responded to the invitation to share some thoughts on peace for this holiday season, I immediately went to my windowsill where I keep a little card that reminds me:

Peace

it does not mean to be in a place

where there is no noise, trouble or hard work.

it means to be in the midst of those things and still

be calm in our heart.

(author unknown)

I believe this resonates with me since I live, work and play in a sometimes noisy, busy atmosphere yet I find more and more the ease of living in peace. I have been blessed this incarnation with people who have shared tools, tips and strategies to help me be still, aware and conscious of the choices available to me in the moment to “be calm in my heart.”

Most recently I was given the gift of being in hospice with my brother-in-law Bob. As anywhere from 8 to 37 people at a time surrounded him with chatter, love, crying, hugging, there laid Bob with a most peaceful look about him. Though agitated briefly, he generally laid in the “midst of those things” yet was still “calm in his heart.” Thank you Bob, for teaching me the true meaning of inner peace. May you rest in Peace.

May we all live in Peace.

Peace out,
JoAnne Dalton, 2009



The writings of Kahlil Gibran have often been a source of inspiration for me. His writings on peace are particularly inspiring at this time of year, and extends throughout all measures of time. I love the images he creates in this writing as he reflects upon the significance of peace at any given moment:

*Peace be with you, Life!
Peace be with you, Awakening!
Peace be with you, Revelation!*

*Peace be with you, oh Day,
who engulfs the darkness of the earth
with thy brilliant light!*

*Peace be with you, oh Night,
through whose darkness
the lights of heaven sparkle!*

Peace be with you, Seasons of the Year!

*Peace be with you, Spring,
who restores the earth to youth!*

*Peace be with you, Summer,
who heralds the glory of the sun!*

*Peace be with you, Autumn,
who gives with joy the fruits of labor
and the harvest of toil!*

*Peace be with you, Winter,
whose rage and tempest restore to nature
her sleeping strength!*

May this peace hold us and keep us in the light of consciousness and compassion, and give us the courage to live our lives as an expression of this noble gift.

*Peace to all,
Jody Dalton, 2009*



Happiness, Peace and Clarity of Motive

Happiness is not so much a matter of what you think, or what you say, or what you do; it's not even in what happens to you. But rather, it's how you think what you think, how you say what you say, how you do what you do, how you experience what you experience. In plain language, that means that whatever you think, say, do, or experience, if you do so out of awareness, out of kindness, out of compassion, out of insight and understanding, out of generosity, the result, both immediately and down the road, will be one of joy, happiness, peace, freedom, and beauty, not only for you, but often those around you. If, on the other hand, you think, speak, act, or experience out of self-centered motives such as greed, anger, control, competitiveness, dishonesty, denial, ignorance, or the intention to cause harm, the result, both immediately and down the road, will be one of confusion, suffering and ugliness. So, the art of being happy, joyous, free and at peace is not in the what, it is in the how.

We do not necessarily get to choose or control our circumstances. We do, however, have immediate and absolute choice over our motives. In order for us to exercise this choice, there must be uncompromising self-awareness and self-honesty. It is our choice of intention that determines whether we actually enjoy lives. Reflect and experiment with the how (the motive) and see how it affects the quality of your life.

from Scott Morrison, *There Is Only Now: A Simple Guide to Spiritual Awakening, Unconditional Love, Liberation, and Transformation*



The Sound of Silence

When asked by someone new to meditation how I sustain my practice during the “dry” and difficult times, I usually direct their attention to the sound currents. Not many people know about sound currents, but once they are prompted to listen for them, they become apparent enough. For me listening to the sound currents is both a technique of practice and a fruit of practice. Sometimes it is only through the sound currents that we can know a little peace. And a little peace can inspire our practice, making it easier to sustain.

Vitvan mentions in his talks on meditation that although meditation is not the whole of spiritual practice, it does provide the *key* to spiritual practice. And the single most important practice in my experience has been listening to the sound currents, which, when cultivated, can unlock innumerable moments of peace. In a sense, then, the key to meditation is cultivating peace, and then, meditation becomes the key to spiritual practice.

There is not too much written about the sound currents. In fact, after 20 years studying Buddhist approaches to meditation I only ran into one teacher that refers to the “sound of silence” in his talks on meditation practice. His name is Ajahn Sumedho, the senior Western teacher in the Theravada tradition. (Copy and paste this link to listen: <http://tinyurl.com/ychk85d>) He seems to have discovered the sound currents on his own, with no apparent prompting from his teachers. But then he had the good sense to return to the sound of silence on a regular basis during his more than 40 year career as a monk.

Unlike Sumedho, I was prompted to turn my attention to the sound currents by several of Vitvan's students over the years. When I suddenly noticed a high-pitched humming when my mind reached a little stillness in meditation, I realized that I had been touched by the sound currents. Once I noticed the ringing in my ears, I focused more and more attention in that direction. And Vitvan is right: energy flows in the direction of *sustained* attention. The more I listened for the sound of silence, between the thoughts, underneath the busy-ness of the mind, the easier it became to sustain the attention there.

Anita suggested that I take the sound currents into the garden and into the work around the place when I lived at Home Farm. I soon became aware that the sound currents continued no matter where I went around the place. I learned to turn the compost, walk the water line, wrestle a snake up the sewer line, all while listening with part of my mind on the sound of silence.

When I moved to Portland I continued to listen while I biked to work, or while I waited for the copy machine to reproduce reports, or while I walked from building to building for a meeting. Becoming mindful of the sound of silence became a regular pastime that I could practice no matter what the outward circumstances of my world. I began to listen at traffic lights, in the grocery store, while I was on hold on the telephone. Yes, underneath the annoying sounds of Muzak, I could still tune in if I remembered to try.

As I get older, I spend more time in the middle of the night listening. I wake up several hours before I need to get up and get busy, so I tune in to the sound currents while I wait for the sun to rise. Although the sun does not always make itself known here in Portland, I can tell by the birdsong that, somewhere, the sun is rising. And underneath the birdsong, there is the steady hum of the sound currents – if I remember to tune in.

The incentive to focus on the sound of silence seems to grow over time. As the peaceful moments of listening extend into more aspects of life, the experience of peace at the core of experience becomes a prompt to practice. It is a case of the practice itself becoming the fruit of the practice. The intention to listen brings peace, and the hum of silence brings peace, and I can't wait to wake up tomorrow and begin again.

May your Christmas be peaceful and may your coming year be filled with mindful moments listening. And may the peace of the Infinite Spirit hold us and keep us while we are seemingly separate one from another.

—Jim Dalton, 2009



Benediction

Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.
 He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face.
 He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold.
 Clasp him to your heart and bless him.
 He has come into this land of an hundred cross-roads.
 I know not how he chose you from the crowd, came to your door,
 and grasped your hand to ask his way.
 He will follow you, laughing the talking, and not a doubt in his heart.
 Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.
 Lay your hand on his head, and pray that though the waves
 underneath grow threatening, yet the breath from above may come and
 fill his sails and waft him to the heaven of peace.
 Forget him not in your hurry, let him come to your heart and bless him.

—Rabindranath Tagore

—Submitted by David Cochrane, 2009



Positive, Happy, and Warm

I experience a great peacefulness at this infolding time of year. For me, the Dalai Lama projects an intense feeling of peacefulness on every topic he addresses. So I have chosen a few paragraphs from *The Joy of Living and Dying in Peace* by His Holiness The Dalai Lama to share with you here. I have come to greatly appreciate the Dalai Lama's perspective.

Something that preoccupies us all is how to live and die peacefully. Death is a form of suffering, it is an experience we would rather avoid, and yet it is something that will definitely befall each and every one of us. Nevertheless, it is possible to adopt a course of action so that we can face this unwelcome event without fear. One of the principal factors that will help us to remain calm and undisturbed at the time of death is the way we have lived our lives. The more we have made our lives meaningful, the less we will regret at the time of death. The way we feel when we come to die is thus very much dependent on the way we have lived.

If our daily life is somehow positive and meaningful, when the end comes, even though we do not wish for it, we will be able to accept it as a part of our life. We will have no regrets. You might ask what we mean by making our daily life meaningful. Our present human existence is not aimed at bringing more suffering upon ourselves and others. Human beings are social animals and our happiness is dependent on

many factors. If we live in harmony with reality we will make our life meaningful....

If we do not reflect about the immanence of death, we will not recall our spiritual practice. The path is our guide for traveling to an unknown place. In ordinary life too, if we want to go someplace we have not been before, we are careful to seek the guidance of someone who has been there. We take a map with us. We plan where to stop, where to stay, and what to take for the journey. But when it comes to going to the unknown place called the next life, the ordinary experiences we have gathered in this life are of little use. Our only guide is our practice. This does not mean that we carry a lot of scriptures along with us, but that our minds should be thoroughly prepared and transformed....

Remembering the awakening mind automatically brings calmness and peace of mind at the time of death. Cultivating a virtuous state of mind as you die can cause virtuous action to ripen and ensure a good rebirth. Therefore, from the point of view of a Buddhist practitioner, living a meaningful daily life means making yourself familiar with virtuous states of mind, which will eventually help you face death. Whether your experience at the time of death is positive or negative is very much dependent on how you have practiced during your life. The important thing is that our day-to-day life should be meaningful, that our attitude should be positive, happy, and warm.

Sending positive, happy, and warm thoughts to you at this holiday season.

—Lynne Hoffman, 2009

Once again I live at Home Farm, a peaceful refuge from any storm. Having survived two hurricanes, one taking my home, achieving peace seemed remote. I needn't have worried. Upon arriving here I began a routine of early morning yoga and meditation. What an inspiration it has been to start each day in the stillness and beauty that surrounds this place.

Before long I began to experience both external and internal peace. Internally the peace became more like absolute bliss. Though brief, what a blessing it has been to know that such state of consciousness are available to all of us. Hopefully the coming year presents the opportunity to find the peace that is within reach of everyone.

—Joyce Krebs, 2009

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Coal in your stocking, and the price of no self.

In the past two years we have seen many profound changes both at home farm and throughout the world. More people are asking questions and inquiring about what is really true in our world of business, banking and government etc. Right on the heels of this is the beginning of a deeper inquiry about what is true in our own personal and private world. What was once considered an acceptable belief to follow is now on the chopping block test of truth.

What do we really know about anything?

Discovering what is the truth has the ability to ignite the destructive cycle of death to the false self which is not fun, not spiritual happiness, not anything anyone really wants to do in their right mind. Right?

What beliefs about our life are sincerely worth keeping? What beliefs should we consider as garbage or "false beliefs". Is any belief true? Is there a right way to do anything? A right way to change or fix anything? Is the human addiction to egoic rightness, (self righteousness) so unbreakable?

Finding out what's really true is the beginning of awakening and the end of self.

"... it is an ego eating virus that if we lower our defenses against it, will devour all illusion." Jed McKenna, *Spiritual Warfare*, page 20.

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Have a Happy Holiday!
Robert Cozzie, HF Scrooge, 2009

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The only voice at Home Farm is that of Vitvan (Ralph DeBit). Within his language is an ancient idiom, expressed in a style that was modern when he conceived it almost a hundred years ago, commas, etceteras and all. His is a golden-hearted effort to place an English vocabulary of human states of awareness into the public domain.

There is no right way. There are too many different types of people, cultural dispositions to specify a path. But there is a path for each of us. That's a different consciousness takes time and effort to uncover also becomes obvious.

Language is the key. How often has your research turned up a known facet expressed in different terminology, translated from yet another language? Look at Ralph, Rolf, Raoul, Raff, and Rafe ... all from the same root! The same thing happens to the language of states of human awareness. Ralph took a bold step out of India's tradition, and another from the Greek, the Hebrew, the Christians, gained yet another from General Semantic nit-picking and then spent his last years co-relating his writings.

That his language is now rather obtuse is simply a function of time on speech patterns. The message is still there, still in English, still takes just as much time to understand; time pulling out the nuggets of expression from his speech, following the bits of advice to take control of yourself, to give your mind instructions, and so forth, leading to the acquisition of greater consciousness.

What we then do with that knowledge ...

—Dan Hathaway, 2009

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One of the most often heard phrases at Christmastime is "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." When Vitvan quotes that phrase he prefers to use the Greek translation version: ... "Peace on earth goodwill among men," which gives us a somewhat different connotation to consider. If we really take time to meditate on it, we soon become aware that the concept of *peace* is one of those high order abstractions for which no referent can be established.

Particularly in today's world the notion of *peace* seems very remote indeed. Yet, we feel we know what it means, and we consider it to be a state of I think it could also be considered the absence of certain things.

As I was contemplating *peace* it occurred to me that perhaps that is what peace really means: a state of being without stress, discord or unhappiness. Considering that idea further, it seems to me that peace is actually our basic state of mind. Peace is always within us when we stop—stop reacting, stop worrying, stop arguing, stop thinking about our many concerns and just allow ourselves to *be*. If this is true, then peace is within the reach of each of us at any given moment. “All you have to do ...” is practice what some Buddhists refer to as *mindfulness*, reach what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has called *flow* in his book by that name. Is it not the state of consciousness we achieve in our more successful moments of our meditation practice? “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you....” [John: 14:27] So perhaps peace is not such a remote concept after all. Only the will to achieve it is lacking. There truly *can* be peace on earth, but I think it will only happen when we can achieve what the words of the song suggest, “Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.” As Wayne Dyer has said, “How do you get world peace? You get world peace through inner peace. If you've got a world full of people who have inner peace, then you have a peaceful world.”

May you find peace this holiday season and in the coming year.

—Marj Coffman, 2009



Excerpts from the *Tao Te Ching*,
translation by Stephen Mitchell

He who clings to his work
will create nothing that endures.

consciousness greatly to be desired. Internationally it seems to mean the *absence* of such things as war, strife, inharmony, etc., among nations. Individually,

The Master does his job
and then stops.

He understands that the universe
is forever out of control,
and that trying to dominate events
goes against the current of the Tao.

Because he believes in himself,
he doesn't try to convince another.
Because he is content with himself,
He doesn't need others' approval.
Because he accepts himself,
the whole world accepts him.

Do your work, then step back.
The only path to serenity.

Knowing others is intelligence;
Knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power.

I have just three things to teach:
simplicity, patience, compassion.

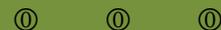


... and this from me:

Peace on Earth, Love's long labor; not lost!
Each contributes what he/she can to a loving
goal.

At the 'Source' notice may be taken.
Change may take up the 'Cause'.
Even if it looks grim, hope may prevail!

Seasons Blessings!
Blessing Be and Be Free!
Bfree, 2009



I recently saw a poem posted in our senior center that I recognized as one I had first seen many years ago. It is a poem that is on the wall in our laundry area, but I can't remember the last time I looked at it. Having re-read it now, I sensed the essence of some of the richest parts of both Eastern and Western religions; how to be at peace with yourself and with your 'world'.

Curiosity prompted me do some research. *Desiderata* was written in the 1920's by Max Ehrmann, a poet and lawyer who lived in Terre Haute, Indiana from 1872 to 1945. The title is Latin for "Things to be desired."

May you find this poem beneficial, as I did upon re-discovering it.

Desiderata

by Max Ehrmann

Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.
As far as possible without surrender
be on good terms with all persons.
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;
and listen to others,
even the dull and the ignorant;
they too have their story.
Avoid loud and aggressive persons,
they are vexations to the spirit.
If you compare yourself with others,
you may become vain and bitter;
for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.
Keep interested in your own career, however humble;
it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.
Exercise caution in your business affairs;
for the world is full of trickery.
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;
many persons strive for high ideals;
and everywhere life is full of heroism.
Be yourself.
Especially, do not feign affection.
Neither be cynical about love;
for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment
it is as perennial as the grass.
Take kindly the counsel of the years,
gracefully surrendering the things of youth.
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.
Beyond a wholesome discipline,
be gentle with yourself.
You are a child of the universe,
no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.
Therefore be at peace with God,
whatever you conceive Him to be,
and whatever your labors and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world.
Be cheerful.
Strive to be happy.

—Bill Coffman, 2009

I've been experiencing a bit of an opening, a deeper sense of peace during the past year or so. I would attribute much of this to living at Home Farm. People have asked me, "Why would someone want to live there in the middle of nowhere, 65 miles to the nearest place to shop?" Well, in my opinion, the only real reason to live here is to live in accord with and help fulfill Vitvan's intentions. In Vitvan's biography, *Vitvan, An American Master*, written by Richard Satriano, Vitvan says,

The day is approaching when the many will seek what the few have found. When that time comes, make the work available. Take it out of here and see to its dissemination. Home Farm must remain as the hub of the wheel and spokes must be extended in every direction.

I think he wanted Home Farm to be a place where seekers could temporarily retreat and learn to orient themselves to the ancient wisdom teachings. He also wanted a place for teachers and students of the School of the Natural Order to come and study, rest and recharge their batteries to prepare for going back out into the fray.

Back to my story. By moving here I disrupted all sorts of habits. By changing bodily habits related to exercise, eating, drinking, etc., I've lost about 120 lbs. I was quite an accomplished drinker and after a couple of years here my drinking slowly dropped away. Another huge thing for me was finally getting a rare disease diagnosed which had plagued me for many years. But the most important thing for me is that I have resumed my regular meditating. Maybe I'm lazy, but I have a hard time meditating regularly all by myself. For me having a group to meditate with is a great thing. I used to be apprehensive about meditating in a group because I couldn't settle my body down and I'd feel disruptive.

Now I'm settling down into the silence, and it slowly becomes less intimidating and more comfortable. Of course, truly changing, or working on oneself, takes a concerted effort on all levels. But for students on the path, meditation seems necessary.

John Fuchs, a Denver Gurdjieff teacher, defines the goal in about the briefest manner possible. "The morning exercise is your bridge to the unknown, the void. You must build this bridge and then cross it." We have so much working against us in this world to finding true peace that we need all the support we can find. I would urge any student to try to find a group in your area with whom to meditate. There might be some sort neutral or non-denominational group. If not, you also might want to start a meditation group yourself and invite others to participate.

I closing, I would like to share this quote from Vitvan's biography:

Up from the millenniums you've come—the Power-to-be-conscious unconsciously identifying as a personal self;

Now you must deliberately reverse the process. You must consciously direct the power-to-be-conscious to a higher registry of frequency than those received as sensation, feeling, and thinking in and under the limitation of sense.

You must consciously direct the power-to-be-conscious out of the apparatus of the psychic nature. You must consciously work to become conscious of the Power-to-be-conscious within yourselves.

I have shown you how it is to be done. I have given you every tool with which to work. Now it is up to you. Become a doer. Do these things. Practice. Practice your meditations. Practice your disciplines. Practice your breathing exercises. Practice. Practice. It is a short step to the realization you seek. Take that step. Direct the Power-to-be-conscious within yourselves to conscious awareness of itself. And join company with the Blessed Ones in Light's Regions.

May the peace of this Infinite Spirit, which passes all understanding, hold us and keep us in the love of the Christed consciousness while we are seemingly separated, one from another.

—Greg Kester, 2009



Each of us has an ego, a psychic nature, that must be expressed and fulfilled, but we also have an altruistic side, a Higher Self. Moment by moment we can choose which to express. By choosing the Higher Self we each contribute to that "Peace on earth, good will among men" we all desire to manifest. We wish you peace and fulfillment in the coming year.

—*Marj Coffman, editor, 2009*

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