

The Divine Inside All
Sunday, August 27, 2023
Tri-County Unitarian Universalists
Summerfield, FL
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lake County
Eustis, FL
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The idea that the divine is present in all of us and in all things is a very old one. In the indigenous religions of most places the belief is that everything has a spirit, something holy and sacred within it. There is a spirit in the river, in the tree, in the bear, in the rain, in the rock.

The mystics of what are now the major religions of the world did not let that idea go. We heard earlier the poem of the 15th century Indian mystic poet Kabir whose writings influenced Hinduism's Bhakti movement and whose verses are found in Sikh scripture [Kabir - Wikipedia](#).

“Inside this clay jug there are canyons and pine mountains
and the maker of canyons and pine mountains!
All seven oceans are inside,
and hundreds of millions of stars.
The acid that tests gold is there,
and the one who judges jewels.
And the music from the strings no one touches,
and the source of all water.

“If you want the truth, I will tell you the truth:
Friend, listen: the God whom I love is inside.”

The thirteenth century Muslim Sufi poet Rumi said, “I am neither body nor soul, for I am the Beloved Himself. I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds are one...” [Self-Identity and the Divine in Rumi | Center for the Study of World Religions \(harvard.edu\)](#).

The sixteenth century Christian Teresa of Avila said, “Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

From the fourth century before the Common Era in the Tao te Ching, “Since before time and space were, the Tao is. It is beyond is and is not. How do I know this is true? I look inside myself and see.”

From the seventeenth century Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur, “Why do you go to the forest in search of the Divine? God lives in all, and abides with you, too. As fragrance dwells in a flower, or reflection in a mirror, so the Divine dwells inside everything; seek therefore in your own heart.”

And finally, from our own nineteenth century American Unitarian philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, he lived in it, and had his being there.... One (person) was true to what is in you and me. ...He said, in this jubilee of sublime emotion, ‘I am divine.

Through me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me; or, see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think.” [EMERSON - ESSAYS - DIVINITY SCHOOL ADDRESS \(vcu.edu\)](#).

Back in my college days I had a religion professor who said something that struck me enough that I still remember it. He said he was not a pantheist, he did not believe in many gods, but he was a panentheist, he believed God was in everything.

I remember that because I resonated with that understanding of the world myself. I don't need to call it God. I could say the Tao or the Sacred or the Divine or the Holy. I don't think of it as something or someone with a personality or as someone who is directing the thing or person in which it dwells like some master puppeteer.

Perhaps Tao would be closer to my own concept. I believe with the mystics that there is some all-pervading holy energy in this world, in all of us, in all animals, in all plants, in all minerals, in all things. I also believe that when we recognize that our relationships change. If I recognize the holy in the river, I am not going to dump my garbage into it. If I recognize the holy in an animal, a plant, a mountain, another person I am going to treat that being or thing with respect.

Someone recently asked me what the Hindu and Buddhist greeting, “Namaste” meant. Our opening words today were an explanation. Namaste. My soul honors your soul. I honor the place in you where the entire universe resides. I honor the light, love, truth, beauty and peace within you, because it is also within me. In sharing these things, we are united, we are the same, we are one.

I like a word that Thich Nhat Hanh uses- “interbeing.” He says that as we meditate we realize that nothing and no one is a separate being. In his book [Living Buddha, Living Christ](#) he wrote, “The Buddhist term is *vipasyana* (insight or looking deeply). ‘Looking deeply’ means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears. The result is insight into the true nature of the object. When we look into the heart of a flower, we see clouds, sunshine, minerals, time, the earth and everything else in the cosmos in it. Without clouds there could be no rain, and there would be no flower. Without time, the flower could not bloom. In fact, the flower is made entirely of non-flower elements; it has no independent, individual existence. It ‘inter-is’ with everything else in the universe...When we see the nature of interbeing, barriers between ourselves and others are dissolved, and peace, love, and understanding are possible. Whenever there is understanding, compassion is born.”

I have often said that my holy word is “connection,” which is not so different from interbeing. Perhaps what is holy is the connection we see when we meditate on something until we can see its connection with all. I would be content if that is what the holy or the sacred means.

But Thich Nhat Hanh also warns against trying to explain or put this into words. He says theologians of various faiths may argue with one another, but mystics of various faiths rarely do. Their faith is not based in words but in their experience. He writes, “A dialogue between a Christian mystic and a Zen master would not be difficult to understand... because they have learned not to get caught in notions or representations, they do not speak as though they alone hold the truth...”

But here I am giving a sermon on the divine inside all. That really does not make a lot of sense. I cannot convince you that this is so with words. You must experience it for yourself.

Still those who have experienced it cannot help but try to put the experience into words.

To return again to our Unitarian Universalist tradition, Emerson wrote,

“Let us learn the revelation of all nature and thought; that the Highest dwells within us, that the sources of nature are in our own minds. As there is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens, so there is no bar or wall in the soul, where we, the effect, cease, and God, the cause, begins. I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine. There is deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is accessible to us. Every moment when the individual feels invaded by it is memorable. It comes to the lowly and simple; it comes to whosoever will put off what is foreign and proud; it comes as insight; it comes as serenity and grandeur. The soul’s health consists in the fullness of its reception. For ever and ever the influx of this better and more universal self is new and unsearchable. Within us it the soul of the whole; the wise silence, the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One. When it breaks through our intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through our will, it is virtue; when it flows through our affection, it is love.”

You will not experience this for yourself by reading Emerson or Thich Nhat Hanh or Thomas Merton or Rabbi Heschel although you may gain a better understanding of your own experience by such reading. Whether you call it meditation or prayer or contemplation or you don’t name it at all, take time to look deeply, to listen deeply, to feel deeply. Experience for yourself that all things are connected, that all things, including you, are holy. The divine is inside all.

Let us pray using a prayer from UU minister Rev. Barbara Pescan.

“Gloria

“The tenacity of Earth and its creatures.

“Kyrie eleison

“These children who will go on to save what we cannot

“Baruch ata Adonai

“The ordinary tenacity of plans and of people

“Om

“The center of the universe which is everywhere, not the least place in the human heart

“Alleluia

“Love that survives anger, and winter, and despair, and sorrow, and even death.

“Shalom

“Love that persists

“Nam myo-ho renge kyo

“Calm that is the seed in the dark

“Amen

“For endings that are beginnings, for beginnings that are endings.

“Alleluia

“For the circle, the spiral, the web, the egg, the orbit, the center, the seed, the flower, the fruit, the opening, the death, the release, the seed.

“Amen

“We are going on

“Amen

“It is going on

“Amen

“Blessed be.”