

**A Personal Practice of Reflection and Renewal  
for Individuals of All Faiths and Traditions  
During the Twelve Holy Nights of the Year  
December 25 til January 6**

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***The First Holy Night - December 25***

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***Solitude and Intimacy***

Let's begin the Holy Nights with Solitude and its other half, Intimacy

Solitude and Intimacy is the polarity that holds us between uniting with ourselves and uniting with others. Some of us are more comfortable being by ourselves. Some of us are more comfortable being with others.

In solitude you are being with yourself by yourself. In intimacy you are with others and others are with you. Both solitude and intimacy are about "being with". "Being with" these are the two words that give meaning and purpose to solitude and intimacy.

Solitude and Intimacy are about "being with" in the gesture of transparency and vulnerability without losing your sense of integrity and authenticity. Transparency is to be seen completely with nothing hidden or altered. Vulnerability is the willing knowledge that you might be hurt by the other or disappointed in your self. Vulnerability is also the capacity to grow and learn in both solitude and intimacy.

Our ability to know both the joy of solitude and the joy of intimacy is awakened by being compassionately revered by our caregivers in our earliest years. Through the mood of reverence we can be solitary and we can be intimate. When we lack reverence in our early years we must learn to forgive others and ourselves and then to revere others and ourselves. The need to willfully birth reverence in our souls as adults because it was not planted in our young souls by our caregivers, is common in our times. It may be the key challenge of our times.

Contemplating the relationships of "with self" and "with others" we find that both lead us to the spiritual feeling of being with God or with Spirit. The gift of solitude is discovering the Divine within. The gift of sacred intimacy is finding the Divine in the other.

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***Questions to Contemplate...***

How do you imagine being with yourself as a sacred state? Do you see yourself fully and with a full and loving heart? Do you like being alone? Or is solitude an anxious state?

Do you seek intimacy with others because you lose your sense of aliveness if there is no one around to reflect your existence? Or do you find yourself most alive while alone?

How do you imagine being with others as a sacred state? Do you bring compassion to your seeing and hearing and

feeling? Do you feel safe with intimacy? Do you have boundaries that breathe?

Do you know the intimate feeling of loving and being loved? Can you describe it? In being alone do you feel you are love?

How do you create the time and space for solitude? For intimacy?

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