

**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**

The Seventh Holy Night - December 31

Reflection and Anticipation

For this last night of our measured year, knowing that at the midnight hour a new measured year begins. (Dear Friends on the other side of the international dateline, I know this message is a day late, but the polarity has meaning for any moment of our lives.) I want to explore how we relate to what has been and what will become. Tonight we will reflect and anticipate.

Reflection comes from the Latin word that means to bend back. "Bend" has such grace in its meaning. When we reflect in our thinking we gracefully bend back to what was past. Reflection is not analysis or evaluation which are often unbending. That reflection is filled with heart.

We reflect on any period of time - and the thoughts, feelings and deeds that filled that time with meaning. We reflect on emotions and relationships. We reflect on the "yes's", the "no's" and the "maybe's" of the past. Reflect on all that has passed by, all that has metamorphosed, all that has remained the same or stood still. Bend back again and again and feel the vitality of the experience.

Note the lovely mood of the recall during reflection. Call out to what has happened in the past year. Call out to all those with whom you spent time with, spoke to and listened to. Call out to who you were then and listen to the echo of your old way of being. Even when reflection finds pain or regret, if we remain in our soft bending heart we will find comfort.

Knowing that we are on a spiritual journey between the threshold of birth and the threshold of death, when we reflect, we might genuflect with reverence in our times of reflection. Genuflect with your body and your soul.

With reflection we bend back. With anticipation we bend forward.

Anticipation is found in expectation and in preparation. As we cross into the New Year, we can and we should anticipate.

Through anticipation we confront the requirements for meeting and shaping the future. We can picture how the future will shape our lives. We can be aware of what is coming toward us.

When we anticipate, we lean toward the future with soft strength. We can meet the good with enthusiasm and the bad with courage. Without anticipation, we are naïve and shallow about the future and we are at

risk to overlook the good and to be trampled by the bad.

Neither reflection nor anticipation is healthy if we resist the truth of the past or the future. Nor are they healthy if we reflect or anticipate from only one perspective.

Remember, the bend is significant. Reflect and anticipate as if you were moving around a bend and seeing both the past and the future from a moving point of view.

Questions to Contemplate...

First, find the bending reflective path in your heart.

Second, look back on the previous year. What events are large and filled with meaning? What events seemed large but now, on reflection are small and without significant meaning? With each event do you feel gratitude or resentment?

Now look at yourself in each event. What do you see? Describe yourself as you were? Why did this event occur? What did it move you toward?

Third, from the same bending path in your heart, look in the direction of the future. What is coming toward you? Are you preparing for these anticipated events? How will you respond to the developing future? Are you willing to change?

You might write your "past self" a letter of reflection and your "future self" a letter of anticipation.

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