



# FIRST-SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIVE SITTING

JANUARY 2021

ATTENTION

*Attention is the  
rarest and purest  
form of generosity.*  
– Simone Weil

**T**hese past ten months have stopped us in our tracks. We have been asked to curtail our movements, cancel vacations, and to remain at home or in our rooms. We accept that these limitations are for our own protection and that of our family, friends, and co-workers; yet for many of us these days have been a burden. How might we turn them into a blessing? Perhaps the gift of this time might be an invitation to deepen our capacity for attention.

Simone Weil was a French philosopher, teacher, and political activist who wrote beautifully of attention as a contemplative practice through which we can reap deep benefits. When she was young she often compared herself to her older brother Andre who was a mathematical genius. This disturbed her because she thought the truth would be unattainable for her because she did not have the genius to penetrate it. Her dilemma was solved when she realized that apprehending the truth did not require genius but one's full attention. This is a capacity we all have, according to Weil, if we are willing to behold, to wait, and to attend.

To give your full and undivided attention to



what is in front of you: a person, a book, a task, is not always easy. We live in an age where multitasking is promoted and militates against fully attending to a person or work at hand. Yet, we know there is no greater gift we can give to another person, no greater form of generosity, than to pay attention, to deeply listen to another. This form of generosity arises out of an outward expression of and inner attitude of loving kindness and compassion.

*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*  
– Acts 20:35

Perhaps the gift of this time of sequestration is the reawakening or strengthening our capacity for attention. As this New Year continues to unfold:

To whom will you be generous with your attention?

What might you need to attend to in the days to come?

# CONTEMPLATIVE SITTING

*Mindfulness gives you the inner space and quietness to look deeply,  
listen well, and be alive, awake and aware.*

- In stillness dwells the calm abiding Presence. I rest in you.
- There beyond reason, and thought is the One who draws me on. Be still my soul.
- Nothing to do, nowhere to go, no bells and whistles, only silence. I am free.

*Mindfulness, that deep silent encounter with the innermost center of our being.  
Therein grows our capacity for the universe, for spirit, for God.*

Remember, AWARENESS is key – awareness I am sad, awareness I am cranky, awareness I am withholding, awareness I am at ease, awareness of such felt gratitude. Awareness of just what is without blame or judgment or criticism ... Awareness is the gift.

## **Mindfulness Practice: Set a time of 5, 10, or more minutes.**

Gently in silence, invite yourself to be with whatever you are aware of, whatever is arising in you ... thoughts or feelings ... breathing into it and out ...

- If what you are aware of is unpleasant, difficult or brings dis-ease, focus your breath there and allow the discomfort to soften and release.
- If your awareness is pleasant, receive it with a smile and release, pass it on. Each time returning to the breath, in and out.
- If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breath flowing in and out.

## **Simple mindful verses: You may choose just one to practice.**

- Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.
- Breathing in ... breathing out, breathing in ... breathing out, in and out.
- Breathing in, 2,3,4. Breathing out, 2,3,4.
- Breathing in, I am aware of my heart, Breathing out, I smile at my heart.

Let your imagination name any part of your body you wish; you could name friends, family, co-workers, elements of the cosmos, Earth, and other species.

My responses to this First Sunday reflection:



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