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- *Fully embracing your own spirituality*
- *Soul compared to a beacon of light*
- *Cycles of life compared to inhaling and exhaling*

You are guided as a group to be together at this time in your lives, not only because of your opportunities to learn from God, but equally important for the opportunity to learn from one another, to grow with one another, to serve one another. It is not by accident that you gather. It is by God's design.

The energy that emanates from your collective spirits is warm, totally loving, and committed to the highest purposes of human life, namely the nourishment and acknowledgment of spirit. You are all spirit, as is every human being. What you see with your senses is but a kind of window dressing that gives you an opportunity to identify one another, but you are given human form so that you may ultimately feel an identification with all human beings, regardless of race or belief, regardless of age, place within society, regardless of whether male or female. Your human bodies present and represent superficial differences. It is all too often that human life focuses on such differences without full acknowledgment of how you are all united.

You have been instructed so many times about the unity of spirit that is shared by all souls and thereby all human beings. But it is one thing to acknowledge in principle that unity, and something very different when you must live your lives so that those differences that you observe fall away and become meaningless. There are differences in behavior, there are differences in customs, ways of living, differences in goals and ambitions, but all of that remains just decoration, trappings of what is most important. For you to fully embrace the spiritual reality that unites each of you, you must first fully embrace your own spirituality. That is a tall order considering that your lives are dominated, understandably so, with the needs that are presented daily, with little reminder of what is really eternal, what is permanent. Despite the challenges, you must draw closer to your own spiritual core, your spiritual being.

Many questions were raised this evening about that spiritual presence: how do you recognize it, you do you know it to be true, how do you give it strength, how do you provide refreshment for the soul, does it indeed need such refreshment. All of these questions that you raise are the result of your commitment to doing what must be done to strengthen that spirit that lies within, without, above, below, before you, behind you.

Your spirit is much like a light beacon. That beacon may be interrupted. There may be a barrier or shield placed so that the light energy from that beacon does not reach out in all directions. Despite that interruption, despite the barrier, the beacon shines brightly. Ultimately the beacon prevails in the night. The light does not go out.

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Your souls are that beacon of energy. When barriers are placed in the way, they are only temporary. They never succeed in blocking out what exists. Each of you must learn to pull away those barriers so the light can shine in every direction.

How can you accomplish this on a daily basis? Being successful in allowing the light to shine is a conscious effort. It is not automatic. The light is permanent but you must consciously commit to the need to be illuminated by that light. You must know the light is there. You must know the light provides direction and warmth and a sense of belonging to something central, crucial, something that is always supportive and uplifting.

When your lives proceed with speed and consistency, you may lose sight of what it is that is generating that energetic consistency. It is at times such as those that one most easily can draw away the barriers to see the light, and yet it is precisely at those times that human beings are least inclined to do so. When you are surrounded by worry, concern, anxiety, that is when for many it is the most difficult to draw away the barrier, and yet that is precisely when most people find a commitment to do precisely that.

We strongly suggest for you to be in touch with your guides. You do so especially when you feel affirmed in life. In so doing, you'll be strengthened to meet those moments when you feel threatened. It is the good times, so to speak, that can provide the means of hearing your guides, and it is that hearing that gives you the strength and ability to listen more intently when life presents its greatest struggles. It is important to remember those moments when you feel affirmed and reach out to your guides with gratitude. It is when you make good decisions, good choices that you reach out to your guides in gratitude. When those events come upon you when you are in particular need of your spiritual strength, the fact that you have heard evidence of your guides and God gives you strength and faith to move forward. No life evolves in a straight line. There are always detours, but you can only realize your objectives when those objectives have been identified. It is in periods of strength and affirmation that such identification must take place.

There are always chance events in life, but your spiritual response is not by chance. It is by commitment. It is by the firm belief that you are, each of you, directly guided, directly prayed for by your guides. It is the reason we serve as guides, to give your lives a sense of direction, a sense of purpose, a sense of what it means to be fulfilled. When those challenges to your lives emerge, you're strengthened by your sense of purpose and direction, and it is that realization that carries you through. Certainly there are many who claim a sudden faith in God when all seems lost. God's presence, God's immediate response is no less a fact for an individual who suddenly sees the need for God. But the way one handles grief, the way one deals with adversity, is in significant ways shaped by the kind of faith, the commitment of purpose that have been formed at times of joy and prosperity and affirmation.

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You wonder about refreshing the spirit. We can tell you that the spirit, the soul center for each of you, is never in need of refreshment, renewal, but your sense of connection to that presence is. A life constantly in turmoil, constantly experiencing suffering, constantly being challenged needs refreshment, needs cleansing, for in that refiner's fire, in that cleansing experience, the individual becomes more effective in allowing that beacon of light within to radiate through that individual to the world beyond. It is the human condition to experience exhaustion, literally or figuratively. But it is never the fate of your soul. It is never a challenge to your guides that one must somehow be refreshed. We are constant in our loving presence because God is constant as a loving presence. God does not tire, God does not need refreshment. Neither do we, your guides. The energy is constant, the loving warmth is persistent and consistent. But sometimes your ability to be receptive is clouded and exhausted and feels beaten, defeated. All human beings need the cleansing of refreshment.

How is that achieved? It is not necessarily achieved by taking vacations, as one would think of them. You can be refreshed while still engaged with work. You can be refreshed while still dominated by concerns and fears. That refreshment comes while looking outward beyond yourselves to other human beings who reflect God. That refreshment comes from looking at nature, the renewal of nature, the beauty and intricacy of nature. The refreshment comes from many quarters, but it is always present.

Even if you are alone, you are refreshed. You may be refreshed by memories—memories of beauty, memories of the love expressed by others, memories of your own acts of compassion, memories of those who have sacrificed in order to benefit someone else. It is not necessary that you must always be in contact with many people to feel that refreshment, but there is of course the need for it.

Spiritual life, as we experience it, is characterized by reaching outward, but also by being strengthened through the presence of other spirits. Your soul does not need refreshment, but it responds to being strengthened. Your soul grows as it experiences love. Your soul grows as you demonstrate that love toward others. Your soul grows as you learn to accept life, to embrace it, to welcome it—all of it. That provides a new dimension for the soul, and it is for such experiences that your soul accompanies human life on its brief journey.

Your lives are given character; they are given strength. They are given all the characteristics that you associate with a loving, forgiving, compassionate God through the experience of human life. When you are discouraged, when you are fearful, when you are angry, when you feel alone even in the company of others, you must direct energies beyond you to encompass humankind, life, nature, all that surrounds you. It is akin to breathing. When you exhale the lungs contract, and the natural reaction is to expand, is to reach out. One cannot continually contract. One cannot continually withdraw, for life requires the balance of expansion, of reaching outward emotionally,

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spiritually, physically. It is that alternating between contracting and expanding, contracting and expanding, that provides a healing balance.

You cannot continually reach out to all around you. It is essential to the cycle of life as it is to the process of breathing, but you must contract from time to time. One action provides a balance for the other. This is a characteristic of all human life. There is joy and celebration; there is fear and worry and sadness. Both are important. Both must be welcomed and given value. But throughout that process of expanding and contracting, all of it occurs within a bright light. None of it is in a permanent shadow.

Your souls do indeed soar. They rise up, they reach out, they are loving and compassionate and joyous and represent all that is positive and good. That is a part of each of you constantly. Pull away those barriers to the light. Pull away the tendency to be driven by doubt and fear—fear of the unknown, fear of failure—for the spiritual center within each of you never fails, never becomes dark. It is always positive, it is always strength-giving. You can count on it, you can recognize it when you hear God speaking.

God's answers through your souls are never answers of failure or loss. They are always answers of affirmation and love. Feel yourself awash in that positive affirmation, and know that such affirmation is the center, the beacon that can characterize your lives now and always.

You are blessed in that affirmation of love. You are blessed in the affirmation of light. You are blessed to be forever in the light of God.

Amen.