

Journey of Unity by Karla Brockie

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Happy Holidays! Hanukah and Advent have begun; Christmas and Kwanza are coming soon, not to mention Diwali, St Lucia, Yule; all the winter festivals of light. The hustle and bustle is well underway, those of us from colder climates are reminiscing about fireside scenes, and we're beginning to haul out the sparkling lights and make lists of gifts and feast menus. It's easy to get swept along by busy-ness. Let us pause, however, and take a breath, and look within. What is the essence, the real spirit of this holiday season?

That could be the question for someone on the Journey of Unity, the final of the Four Spiritualities described by Peter Tufts-Richardson in his book. Richardson's premise is that the Myers Briggs personality indicator has clues for us about what sort of spiritual path may suit us, and what sort of path may not. In previous sermons this fall, we have wandered down the other three paths a bit (I put "crib notes" in the insert of the order of service again); the Journey of Works for the Sensing Thinking (ST) personality; the Journey of Devotion for the Sensing Feeling (SF) type; and the Journey of

Harmony, for the Intuitive Feeling (NF) type. Now we finish with a short trip along the path for the Intuitive Thinkers (NT); the journey of Unity. These thinkers tend to go very broad, or very deep, looking for underlying or overarching principles. They ardently seek the “truth that can be global, honest, and clear,... see social justice as the aim and context for our involvement,... and clarity as the basis for spiritual enlightenment.”

NT’s can be philosophical realists, or idealists. They wish to unify their understanding of the universe. I find NT’s are often the people I most admire, *and* I can feel somewhat intimidated by their intellectual prowess. Many, many Unitarian Universalist ministers fall into this category! Our exploration of all the types helps us to understand and honor one another’s perspectives and styles, and to honor our own as well. I feel much better about my own Intuitive Feeling approach when I see it as one equally valid path among others.

Some among us are drawn to the elegance and simplicity of Buddhism as a guide for spiritual development and for living, and Richardson speaks of the Buddha as an example of the NT personality. The man we call the Buddha made the search for truth his life’s quest, at every turn seeking the universal.

The “middle path” that is Buddhism stretches wide to consider all beings and all the universe, and take one deep beyond the superficial perception of the world. Richardson also quotes people like Unitarian Minister William Ellery Channing, author Albert Camus, Buckminster Fuller (grand nephew of Unitarian religious education guiding light Margaret Fuller, another NT), Socrates, and Albert Schweitzer. Here he quotes Schweitzer (an honorary Unitarian) with a marvelous example of NT process (p45):

*Lost in thought I sat on the deck of the barge, struggling to find the elementary and universal conception of the ethical which I had not discovered in any philosophy. Sheet after sheet I covered with disconnected sentences, merely to keep myself concentrated on the problem. Late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase, “Reverence for Life.” The iron door had yielded: the path in the thicket had become visible. Now I had found my way to the idea in which affirmation of the world and ethics are contained side by side. Now I knew that the ethical acceptance of the world and of life, together with the ideals of civilization contained in this concept, has a foundation in thought.*

When it comes to the holidays, those NF's like me on the Journey of Harmony might want to blend together elements of many different festivals—we light a menorah and tell the story of Hanukah at my house, even though we have no Jewish heritage, because the story and tradition have meaning and value to us, and we celebrate elements of Christmas, and revel in all the celebrations we can find. ST's on their Works path might put their energies into providing relief for the poor, collecting toys for children or sending supplies to those struggling overseas. SF types might lean towards devotion; concentrating on the ancient stories, bringing out the sacred symbols and objects, returning to sacred places. On the journey of Unity, the NT's contemplate the theme of meaning running through, and the essential truths that bind us all. Let us travel that path together a little. I've just returned from Camp deBenneville Pines, so I can easily imagine a dusting of snow, a cold breeze focusing my attention.

Our focus for the holiday season this year is Joy. How can that be an underlying principle, you might ask. But putting on my Thinking hat, I have been trying on the idea of Joy as a philosophy, lately. The winter holidays

are meant to be full of joy, of celebration, calling our attention to the glorious and miraculous, and reveling in it. This I believe is an elemental human need; to experience and nurture an experience and attitude of Joy. The festivals of light call us to this joy, and it can be infectious, and when we get it, it is marvelous; the music and singing, the beauty, the reunion. When we experience impediments to that joy, in this season it is acutely painful.

Perhaps the deeper meaning of the season is hope. The winter solstice brings us the longest and darkest night of the year, in cold climates sometimes all of life seems finished in winter, so we light the Yule log or the Christmas or Hanukah candles to signify the hope we want to protect in dark times. The story of the new baby born as the hope of the world touches many hearts. We need hope, and the winter festivals embody and inspire it.

Peace is a deep element of the holidays. We pray and work for world peace, and for inner peace. I remember a Swedish film where a daughter is trying to explain the sound of snow to her father who has been deaf from birth; “Snow swallows up all the sound.” The peacefulness of that is profound. We sing, “Sleep in heavenly peace.”

And of course, there is Love. Love is at heart of the holidays. Some attend to beloved families. There is emphasis on loving our neighbors, and the less fortunate. There can be renewed attention to love of community, and love of faith, and of the journey. Paul the Apostle, perhaps another NT, found the principle of love as the basis for faithful living, and he was particularly concerned with living out love in congregational life.

Here's a thought; perhaps Unity itself is the unifying principle of the holidays. This is a time when we aspire to work together, in all our diversity of opinion and personality and style and theology and background and origin and attitude, to work together for the beloved community of shared values.

We honor the congregation as a unified entity in all the many colors and patterns of the crazy quilt that it is, as we create special worship services together, and holiday concerts and parties together, and service projects together. The holidays call us to better behavior, call us to honor and respect and celebrate differences, call us to work in harmony, call us to peace. We are called to our covenant; "Love is the doctrine of this church; The quest of truth is its sacrament; And service is its prayer. To dwell together in peace; To seek knowledge in freedom; To serve humankind in Friendship; Thus do

we covenant.” In this covenant, we are unified, and the holidays lift us up in unity.

As we mingle together in all the work and play of the season; as we play our different instruments in the orchestra, and display our diverse spiritual personalities, introverts and extraverts, judges and perceivers; let the unity of our ultimate connectedness shine through all we do. Let us practice during the holidays the good behavior we intend to nurture throughout the year. Let us be inspirations to one another of joy, hope, peace, love, and unity.