

Burning Bowl 2019

The holidays are over and most people breathe a sigh. It may be a sigh of relief that the pitched activity of the holidays is over. It may be a sigh of resignation that the relentless call to be happy and joyful is done. It may be a sign of wistfulness that a time of gathering together and sharing has ended and it will be another year before that happens again.

With the holidays behind us, what is before us? The beginning of a new calendar year. If we haven't already, most of us who work will return to routine work tomorrow. I've seen a few posts about people confused what day of the week it is in the fuzzy, festive time warp. Days off in the middle of the week with extra days off positioned around the holiday so Monday and Friday have little meaning. As we return to our "routine" do we want to simply repeat 2019? Maybe with a few weather differences? Is "routine" synonymous with "rut"?

Many of us want to begin the year with a list of "resolutions". The dictionary says a resolution is "A firm decision to do or not to do a thing." Our list of resolutions are really a list of "to do's". Yet many of us run into the same dilemma Paul had, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do **not** do what I **want**, but I **do** the very thing I **hate**." How many of us resolve, with every good intention, to get up a little earlier so we can meditate or exercise? And then we discover the warm embrace of bed when morning looms cold and still dark. We resolve to **push away** whatever it is that we have decreed to be most troubling; and sooner or later, there it is. A beer, a chocolate truffle, a shopping sale: beckoning for us to indulge just a *little*. And then, a few beers, a half dozen truffles and a shopping bag full later, there is not even a little of our resolve *left*. As human **doings** we have a conditioning to focus on our outer conditions, which keeps our focus on what we do. *Will power* is ego's belief that it can somehow control those impulses within our bodies and force us to do or not do a thing. How is that working for you?

In Unity, we try to begin within and work our way out into the manifest world. So before we begin to focus on what we are or are not *doing*, we must examine what we do or do not *believe*.

In Keep A True Lent, Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore makes this claim:

Although potentially perfect and incapable of producing a single condition of permanent consciousness out of harmony with divine Principle, many persons are impregnated with a belief of limitation, and they need the dissolving power of denial to set them free.

Many of us get caught in “potentially perfect and incapable of producing a single condition of permanent consciousness out of harmony with divine Principle.” That seems **not** to describe me! There are two key words in this quote. **Potentially** means it exists within us whether we utilize it or not. Imagine someone living in darkness because they never connect a lamp to the electricity and flip the switch. The warm and light house never manifests because no one recognizes the potentiality in it. If we don’t see the potential manifesting right now, it doesn’t mean the potential is not there. We have to look within, tap into and make use of divine Principle. The second key I think is **permanent** consciousness out of harmony. Our spiritual dna is set and we can’t change it. We are **very** capable of producing a variety of *temporary* consciousness beliefs in lack and limitation and they are all **temporary**. We can transcend and transform our belief in limitation and return to our permanent consciousness in harmony with divine Principle. How? The **dissolving** power of denial sets us free. Every year the Burning Bowl is our ritual of the dissolving power of denial. Do we deny the limiting thoughts and beliefs exist? NO! We deny that these beliefs are part of our spiritual dna and therefore they are temporary and we deny them power to block our good and our connection to the Divine.

This is always the happy and sad point in the Burning Bowl lesson where I get to say, “The good news is: It’s all consciousness. The bad news is: It’s all consciousness.”

It is good news because who controls your consciousness? You! You have a say in how you experience the world around you. You get to choose your words and you can choose a new emotion even after your body has an immediate reaction to something. You choose what you focus on; the intentions you set; the steps you take.

Some people feel it is bad news because they want the outside to change without changing themselves. They want someone or something outside themselves to blame for what they feel is not working and **someone else should fix** what they perceive is missing or not working in their world.

Life is a **Do It Yourself** project. Your life is not someone else's project. And if you think someone else's life is your project; hmmm... you might want to step back and reflect on that. You can buy all the books in the world (and some of us have a start on that); you can hire a life coach for every day in the week (and there is nothing wrong with coaches); you can enroll in as many classes as you like; eventually YOU have to choose. No matter how much support you have, your beliefs about yourself and the world will guide you into action or inaction. You will still be creating your life—not someone else.

Fillmore gives us some encouragement. *If consciousness departed from Principle and formed images that were manifested as disease, discord, any limitation of the perfect, is it not possible for that **same** consciousness to undo its faulty work and build anew, according to wisdom's plan? It certainly is, and we know by experience that when guided by the Spirit of truth, or Christ within, our consciousness rebuilds the weak and tottering structures of materiality and vivifies them with an undying energy and life. The meek and lowly yet dignified and all-wise Spirit within you now burns with its **own** clear light, and you henceforth understand that you are one with the **supreme mind** that knows only original thought--that is influenced by nothing outside of itself. This is Truth, and the Spirit of truth in you now flames forth in acknowledgment.*

The Spirit of Truth **in you** now flames forth in acknowledgement that you are one with Supreme Mind! Fire is a ritual of purification. What can the flames consume that frees your own clear light to shine brightly?

There are surely some faulty thoughts each of us is holding on to. Which ones are you ready to stop giving power to in 2020? We often talk about “releasing” in Unity. I want to clarify a tiny point here. The thoughts may continue to appear in consciousness. What we release is the energy we give the thoughts and the energy the thought triggers in us. Perhaps it is more accurate to say we “transcend” and “transform” these thoughts rather than “release” them. We notice them again and again but we reach the point we are ready to rise to a new level of consciousness of Truth. We let the past be transformed from a prison holding us to a lesson empowering us. We no longer give these thoughts the power of truth. We see them and know them as **illusions**.

You have a sense of what is limiting you. What tightens your chest or your gut? Who can you not forgive? What limiting things do you say to yourself about your abilities and circumstances? Do you expect yourself to be perfect?

Do you expect your parents or children or spouse to be perfect? Do you long to exert control over the actions of others? You may not be able to know where the thought or belief originally came from, but you know it is not in alignment with the Truth of your being. You are not being your authentic self when you are acting or reacting from this thought. Our authentic self sees the light in others just as they are.

When you came in you should have gotten a small square of paper and a pencil. If you need either one, please raise your hand and the ushers will bring some extras. Please write on the paper those thoughts and beliefs which need to be illuminated as error and be subjected to the flame of the Spirit of Truth. If you are writing down something familiar that you might have released before, don't worry. Every time the purifying light reaches those thoughts, they weaken in power and the truth becomes stronger and stronger.

We will have a time of quiet in which you can reflect and write upon your paper a word or two about what is being released, transcended and transformed. Please use the special paper for the burning. At the end of the time, I will invite you to come forward. The ushers will guide you row by row. You can put your paper into the tub and we will allow the flame of the Spirit of Truth to illuminate the error thoughts.

As we clear away the old, we like to begin with a positive new seed. The Angel Cards have a single word or concept that is uniquely yours. Please take an angel card when you drop off your paper and after all the old is purified we will take a moment to use the heavier paper to write our intentions for new possibilities to fill our minds and manifest in our lives.

Now let us begin our time of reflection. Open and receptive to the guidance of Spirit, we prepare for a new journey in 2020, freed from the limiting beliefs illumined now by the flame of Truth. As Charles Fillmore says:

We have been burdened too long with the rubbish of antiquity. Cast it out of your consciousness and assume the mental dominion that was yours before the worlds were formed [when] you were one with the consciousness of the [One Power and Presence of the Perfect Mind].