



THE GUIDE FOR
Inner Christmas



The Guide for Inner Christmas

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I am available for lectures, workshops, and interviews on Inner Christmas, the Inner Year and many other topics. I get my greatest inspirations from my audiences.

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I apologize for any typos.

If you do not understand something and need some clarification, please email me.

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The Need For Inner Christmas

Do you ever find at the end of the holidays, no matter how wonderful they have been, you feel something was missing?

Hiding behind the rich blessings of gifts and food, traditions and celebrations, music and decorations, friends and family there is a dark silent place still longing for...

Some new gift of self-love to be unwrapped.
Some delicious feast of self-awareness to be prepared and enjoyed.
Some tradition of self-attention to be celebrated.

This longing doesn't happen at any other time of year. Holidays— national, cultural, religious—come and go with the seasons without arousing this unmet need in our souls.

And this longing has been felt throughout human history, with all the vast varieties of rituals. It is a mystery of the soul. Since the beginning of consciousness, the darkest time of the year has been different.

Even in a family able to provide the richest of Christmases, there is something about Christmastime that defies satisfaction, the kind of satisfaction that give us that "just right" feeling. We feel that "there is never enough" and at the same time, that "it is all too much." Too much or not enough goodies or goodwill. Too much or not enough spirituality or sensuality. Each of us could make our Christmas lists of too much and not enough and each would be unique and illuminating of our own personal Christmas. Our personal perceptions and judgments of scarcity and excess crowd out the "just right" feeling each of us longs for at Christmas.

And there are other Christmas dilemmas: Finding balance or equilibrium in our souls and in the world between the seasonal needs for spiritual fulfillment and material accumulation is difficult.

Some of us struggle with loneliness, others with holiday party burnout. Emotional delight and emotional disappointment confuse us. Sensory intensity exists everywhere and lacks any meaningful aesthetic beyond overflowing and overwhelming. Giving and receiving the right gift (at the right price) is rare. We overeat and volunteer at soup kitchens. The list goes on.

For all our seasonal seeking, we struggle year after year to find our own center of peace and goodwill between

Need and demand,

Nature and technology

Calm and craziness

Giving and receiving

Greed and generosity

Spirit and matter

Self and other

Order and uproar

Fantasy and reality

Christmas brings all these polarities and more.



After Christmas we have the New Year bringing the thought that carrying on in our familiar ways and growing older day-by-day is not acceptable. We must be more disciplined, become better and stronger. Moral development and self-denial must be our resolve.

We make another list—the things I commit to changing about myself. We look at the arithmetic of our lives: what we want to add, subtract, multiply and divide in our surroundings, our body and our soul.

The New Year often is a time of self-judgment and self-correction, not self-love. What is the New Year? Is it just the changing of a digit, the number name of the year on the calendar? Is it just a reason for a party? Shouldn't we be celebrating the return of the light, the rebirth of the divine, and the renewal of selfhood?

Our sense of the meaning of the New Year will deepen if we find what we want in Christmas. We need a new kind of Christmas, a Christmas of self-fulfillment and self-development.

Why at this time of year would the soul need to experience delight, disappointment and a need for self-development? Could there be an archetypal process, an essential cycle of self-attention that is intrinsic to our humanity?

For many millennia human beings found the dark of winter a time of earthly and cosmic stillness. It was a holiday, a vacation from the busyness of Nature and the demands of survival. Deep mystery rituals occurred to celebrate the Solstice and revere the sacredness of the spirit and seek reassurance that the gods would let life return.

Now as humanity finds itself in the early years of the 21st Century, we can look at our modern Christmas experiences and feel a longing rising up from both our contemporary soul needs and our primal ancient needs. As technology has minimized our perceptions of the dramatic cycle of nature, we find ourselves creating a balancing awareness by turning inward to the natural cycle of our souls with more intensity, with more self-sensitivity.

Perhaps if we look at the yearly cycle of the sun and nature we can learn something true about our own inner life. The sun is like the



human spirit. It evolves. We see this physically and we feel it spiritually.

Yearly, the sun is born anew through a elegant and essential cosmic cycle. Each year, the sun physically moves one degree in the great cosmic circle of the zodiac and its force alters "one degree" on a spiritual level. It is the same old physical sun and a brand new spiritual sun.

In its daily cycle the physical sun rises and sets at a different time and moves through the sky on a different path every day. Daily the spiritual sun subtly changes. These two cycles, the physical and the spiritual, profoundly effect humanity and each of us individually. Our souls respond to the delicate change in the sun with an inner process of transformation. Nature guides us into ourselves as she becomes still and silent. Our sense of self settles in an inner solitude (Sol is Latin for sun). We find the sunspace deep within our soul. The soul's sunspace is the place of Inner Christmas.

During Inner Christmas we shine inner light on a greater knowledge, understanding and compassion for our own spirit and nature. We become full of ourselves as the light brightens within our soul's sunspace. Like the Sun moving through the twelve cosmic constellations of the Zodiac and the twelve months of the year, Inner Christmas moves through the Twelve Holy Nights between December 25 and January 6 providing 12 gifts and 12 sacred celebrations! We awaken, deepen and celebrate our relationship to twelve aspects of our soul.

With this annual receiving of inner gifts, we can live into the new year with clarity of thought, warmth of heart and strength of will. We then celebrate these gifts during the twelve months of the inner year.

I invite you to celebrate Inner Christmas, a new Christmas devoted to personal meaning and the yearly birth of new sense of self.

Christmas and Me

My birthday is December 11th. My birth announcement was a Christmas card. My parents always decorated the tree on my birthday. The celebration of my birth so close to Christmas Day wove my sense of self into the holiday season in a complicated way. I held a naive feeling that celebrating myself and celebrating Christmas were a two-for-one special time.

As the connected celebrations of birthdays and Christmases passed and I struggled with my personal growth and healing, I realized that finding meaning in myself and finding meaning in Christmas might also be interwoven. I always hoped for the perfect Christmas—don't we all?—food, decoration, party, music, presents, shopping, church, reindeers, Santa, choirs of angels, family, friends, everything. And don't forget the snow!

Somehow Nature, Spirit, recipes, wrapping paper, credit cards and my inspired efforts would create a sparkling, transcendent seasonal mood. I sought the perfect life—don't we all?—joy, abundance, love, peace, success, great body, great home, great relationships, no anxiety, no fear, no anger. Ideally, as I blew out the candles, I would reflect on a fantastic year of transformation and empowerment.

Most years I came close. Lots of birthday and Christmas delight. If I felt disappointment, there was always next year. I would do better. Isn't that what New Year's Resolutions are for? Yet, every year regardless of the delight or disappointment, there was a special longing. This kind of longing is never clearly defined or understood. My longing rose up from a hunger or a vague emptiness yearning to be satisfied and filled. It did not have anything to do with the celebration of either my birthday or what I found under the Christmas Tree or who shared the holidays with me. What I longed for was not more joy, more gifts, or more love. I also realized that my Christmas longing was different from the longing I felt at other times of the year. It was so specific to the season and not connected to my circumstances, my state of mind or my emotional mood. It was not overwhelming or dramatic but quiet and deep. This Christmas longing was heartfelt, symbolic and felt universal rather than personal.

Every year I would wonder about this longing until it faded with the New Year and the ending of the holidays, only to reemerge with the next December. My temperament is that of a happy melancholic. It



gives me lots of experience with longing (the melancholic piece) and an ever-present, positive sense that fulfillment is not just possible but likely (the happy piece). My interest in the inner life, my own and everyone else's, is passionate and enthusiastic. My spiritual life is eclectic and ecumenical.¹ My cultural foundations are Christian. Questions of a psychospiritual nature are always alive in my mind and heart. Yet, it was a simple question to my daughter's teacher that led me to the illumination and understanding of the cause and meaning of my Christmas longing.

Discovering the Twelve Holy Nights

One morning in late November, 1987, I brought my daughter into her Waldorf classroom and noticed how dark the room was. I asked her teacher why the lights weren't on. With a matter of fact tone he answered, "The children need to experience the changing of seasonal light."

"To experience the changing of seasonal light!"

Something in my soul responded. Why would this experience of Nature's growing darkness be important?

Could it be that my longing was related to a need to be surrounded in darkness? When I am in the dark, I want light. Where's the light switch—the light switch of my soul? And do I want light to see my way in my worldly life or do I want light to see into my spirit?

Could it be that Nature's darkness allows me to see(k) my own inner light?

If the sense perceptible world grows dark does the inner world, the spiritual world, grow light?

I found the answers to these questions in the visionary insights of Rudolf Steiner², the founder of Waldorf education. When the Earth's energy contracts and the physical sun dims with the forces of

1 I am eclectic in that I have always had a broad perspective on the Spiritual life. From early childhood, the course of my life and my natural inclination led me into the mysteries of religious thought, practice and culture throughout history and the world. I am ecumenical in my ability to find myself a Spiritual home in all beliefs and perspectives.

2 Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was an visionary, scientist, and philosopher who developed the pedagogy and methodology of Waldorf Education. In over 6000 lectures and 54 books, he offered new, profoundly human, forms of medicine, architecture, movement, social organization, agriculture and banking. Calling his insights, Anthroposophy, he related the human being to the cosmic and revealed the evolution of human consciousness. He shared a picture of the human being that clarified my experience of my own humanity. I found in Steiner many answers and great inspirations.



winter, the human soul expands and strengthens to reach up to spiritual heights. Steiner spoke of a Christmas Imagination of the Twelve Holy Nights. His clairvoyance saw that the veils between the Spiritual world and the material world lift between Christmas and Epiphany creating a glorious possibility for personal rebirth. This struck my soul deeply. I decided to celebrate the Twelve Holy Nights, and each Christmas thereafter, I anticipated them.

I chose a special reading for each Holy Night. I gave talks at the local Anthroposophical Society as I became more inspired by Steiner's work. I meditated. I journaled. Sometimes I came to a new insight or meaning.

But my feeling was similar to my feeling for all the other Christmas activities—I still found myself longing, not for more in terms of quantity, but for more in terms of light and depth and richness. I wanted layers. I wanted to enter the unfolding life forces of a rose from tight bud to full bloom. I did not want this to be easy or simple or superficial. I wanted a true Christmas experience beyond my senses and beyond my sentimentality. I wanted sacredness and inner birth.

On December 22, 2004, after returning from a visit to Rockefeller Plaza with the giant Christmas tree, I wrote an e-newsletter to my mailing list of several hundred individuals around the world sharing the image of the Twelve Holy Nights with them. Knowing how difficult it is to celebrate the Twelve Holy Nights, I spontaneously added that I would email them a daily reminder and a suggested thought for personal reflection. I had no idea what I would offer them. I had promised twelve gifts, gifts that would come from my heart. I had no plan and no time to plan. But I had made a commitment and felt good about it.

Beginning on Christmas Day, I woke up every morning with some sense of what to write as a daily contemplation, as if I was being given a gift to pass on to my readers. Sometimes I would feel resistance or doubt about keeping my word, but my promise to give these gifts held fast.

Every time I pressed the Send button on my computer, I felt a little panic. What if my message did not make sense to the recipient? What if the idea bored them? I used a mail marketing service that let me view who opened the emails and also let recipients unsubscribe. Being aware of who opened the emails and when was another personal challenge for me as acceptance is sometimes as threatening as rejections. Many, so many, opened them faithfully; some

sporadically opened them, and a few unsubscribed. To my surprise many emails arrived thanking me. Never had I received such an outpouring of appreciation from my recipients. Never had I felt so blessed by Christmas.

The following June, Eric Utne, the founder and publisher of The Utne Reader magazine, called and asked if I would rewrite my twelve Inner Christmas messages for his Cosmo Doogood's Urban Almanac.

For Christmas, 2005 I wrote a new set of twelve messages with a focus on a different aspect of the inner life. Again, I received a heart-warming response. Readers forwarded the messages to friends around the world. I had found a way to enrich the Christmas experience and share the phenomenon of the Twelve Holy Nights in an unexpected way. I had found what I was longing for, an inner Christmas.

For the third Christmas, 2006 before the days of YouTube, I prepared a Flash e-movie, The Inner Christmas Movie. That emovie went to 223 email addresses on December 18th, 2006 and was viewed by 36,000 people in 60 countries by January 6th. Nine thousand individuals subscribed to the Twelve Holy Nights messages.

Writing the messages gives me the Christmas I was longing for. Now my Christmas season is complete and totally fulfilling. What I give and receive is always joyful. Having Inner Christmas makes all the other aspects of Christmas richer and more meaningful.

In the following pages, I describe Inner Christmas, its meaning for you, and how you can celebrate it. INNER CHRISTMAS is my gift to you. Blessings on your Christmas soul.

Who is Inner Christmas written for?

Inner Christmas is written for all human beings—not only those who grew up in a Christian home or in a society dominated by Christian beliefs.

The only requirement for finding value in Inner Christmas is a personal sense that what we call spirit is (or may be) a reality and that this Spirit lives within and behind all material reality. If you, reader, find within yourself (and recognize in others) a divinity, a

light, a truth, a beauty and a goodness that is transcendent, eternal, and immeasurable, then you will find something in Inner Christmas that is worth your time and your money.

In fact, even if you are a complete materialist (one who doubts or denies the existence of God, spirit and all things that you are unable to define mathematically, or experience in time and space, or perceive with your senses) the twelve messages for the HolyNights will provide meaning and enjoyment. They will offer you new thoughts and new questions to ponder. You will find new perspectives and new shadings about your inner life. Simply ignore the mentions of and references to spirit and receive the gifts of the Inner Christmas messages.

The Authority of Inner Christmas

I write Inner Christmas confident that it will influence your experience of yourself, your inner life, your ability to grow more self-loving and self-aware. I trust that Inner Christmas will become one of your most meaningful Christmas traditions. But I do not write as an authority.

I am a student of the healing and unfolding of individual spiritual and practical development. I have studied hundreds of books. When I study books, and even more when I integrate the wisdom I find in them, I listen for a resonance in my "thinking heart." Always listen to and trust your heart first then you know whether to listen and trust an author. The book's ideas must ring true, shine with beauty and vibrate with goodness. Something in the author's words must extend beyond the written words to the mystery of meaning, nourishing my soul and enthusing my sense of things and grounding me in my self. These inner feelings are the resonance with the authenticity, not the authority, of the writer.

The authority of Inner Christmas will exist only as a feeling in your heart as you read my work. Does it resonate deep inside you? Does your heart feel the undertones of practical grounding and the overtones of inspiration? Your soul needs both to find new harmonies. If there is no resonance in your heart, Inner Christmas has no authority for or influence on you.

I've written Inner Christmas from deep inside myself, from the seat of my heart wisdom to that same wise, holy part in you. Rudolf Steiner said, "Wisdom is crystallized suffering." The place where each

of us crystallizes our suffering is hidden in our self-compassionate heart. So it is my life of suffering, crystallized in my joyful heart, that speaks to you in this little book for Inner Christmas.



Inner Christmas and the Calendar of the Soul

Since the beginning of human consciousness, the soul has experienced an inner cyclical rhythm that mirrors the activity of the stars and of the earthly kingdoms. Our souls know an inner Spring, an inner Summer, an inner Autumn and an inner Winter. These are the seasons of the soul.

Each inner season brings a special relationship and a task to our evolving consciousness as we develop into both an earthly and a spiritual being.

Reflecting the natural world, the soul seasons transform at solstices and equinoxes.

The light and dark aspects of our inner lives move from attention to ourselves as earthly beings to attention to ourselves as spiritual beings and returns.

In summertime's light and warmth, our souls embrace our intense perceptions of the world. But in the dark, cold silence of early winter, our souls turn inward seeking the Spirit.

Inner Christmas focuses on the soul at "Inner Winter" and its "inner Solstice."

What do we find for our spirit-seeking souls at the Winter Solstice?

The inner Winter Solstice is the time when the "I," the pure selfhood—the inner sun—seeks rebirth in the soul. The "I" dawns anew within the soul, and with this dawning come new perspectives, new insights, new intentions, new freedom and new love.

These are the gifts of Inner Christmas.



The Soul's Inner Nativity

We can't think of Christmas without relating it to the birth of Jesus Christ. We know about the baby in the manger, the two parents, the shepherds, the kings, the animals, the choirs of angels, the star and, above all, the mysterious imagination of the Son of God born a human being. How does this connect with Inner Christmas?

The experience of Inner Christmas is esoteric—"eso" is Greek for within. It is intimate and personal. All that matters is your own experience of and feeling for the birth of the divine as a human being. Where do you find this experience of the esoteric divinity? In your own heart.

All the exoteric, religious, cultural aspects of the Nativity story have an inner reflection and meaning that can live freely in each individual as personal experience regardless of their beliefs and background. Esoteric mysteries are both individual and universal and that is the source of their sacred significance. The Christmas mysteries, when earthly Nature and heavenly firmament touch each other in our souls, hold the possibility of sacred significance for each and every one of us.

Some of the key esoteric elements of the soul's inner nativity reflect the humble birth of the innocent Divine Child, the awakening to a new sense of destiny at Epiphany, the warm, earthly simplicity of the shepherds and the star-filled wisdom of the three Magi. All these elements find personal meaning in your heart and your soul.

Inner Christmas is the path to a new yearly meaning of each element. I explore the esoteric Nativity further in my book, *Six Ways to Celebrate Christmas! & Celebrate You!*

With each Inner Christmas, something new and divine is born in your soul. This newborn self brings new meaning, significance and purpose to your life and your expression in the world.

Inner Christmas asks you to journey to a place (inner Bethlehem) where in an unexpected and humble corner (the inner stable) of your soul you are born anew. You find gifts of earthly innocence and simplicity (from your inner shepherds) and gifts of star-led wisdom (from your inner magi).

Be open to your inner nativity during the Twelve Holy Nights.



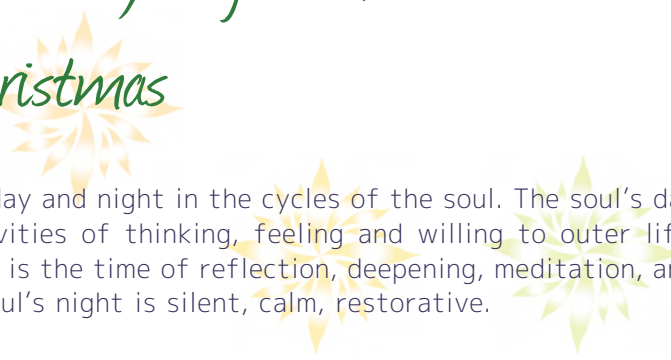
The esoteric nativity is not about believing.
It is about experiencing.
Let yourself experience.

The Inner Christmas messages give a focus to your inner nativity experience. Each year the theme of the messages is presented from twelve perspectives or elements.

You may find your Inner Christmas birth in one particular message or in the tapestry all twelve messages weave together. This guide offers some suggestions to nurture and support your experience.



The Twelve Holy Nights of Inner Christmas



We experience day and night in the cycles of the soul. The soul's day brings the activities of thinking, feeling and willing to outer life. The soul's night is the time of reflection, deepening, meditation, and mystery. The soul's night is silent, calm, restorative.

The soul's day works with the questions of life in the world of space and time, birth and death, material success and failure, personal pleasure and pain. The soul's night is the time spent transmuting the soul's day into inner development, moral imaginations and spiritual consciousness.

In the soul's day we confront the challenges, successes and failures of life. In the soul's night we open to the meaning and purpose of the challenges, successes and failures of our daily lives.

In the soul's day we interact with incarnated beings and sense perceptible realities in a flow of time from past to future. In the soul's night we interact with beings free of the weight and shadows of corporeality and in the realms of eternity beyond the linear flow of time allowing us to attain a perspective, perhaps even a knowledge, that goes beyond the limitations of space and time.

We grow our individuality in the soul's night. We digest and metabolize what we have taken in during our soul's day consciousness. What of the soul's day do we want to transform into our inner substance? What do we need to release and to forgive?



The Twelve Holy Nights of Your Soul

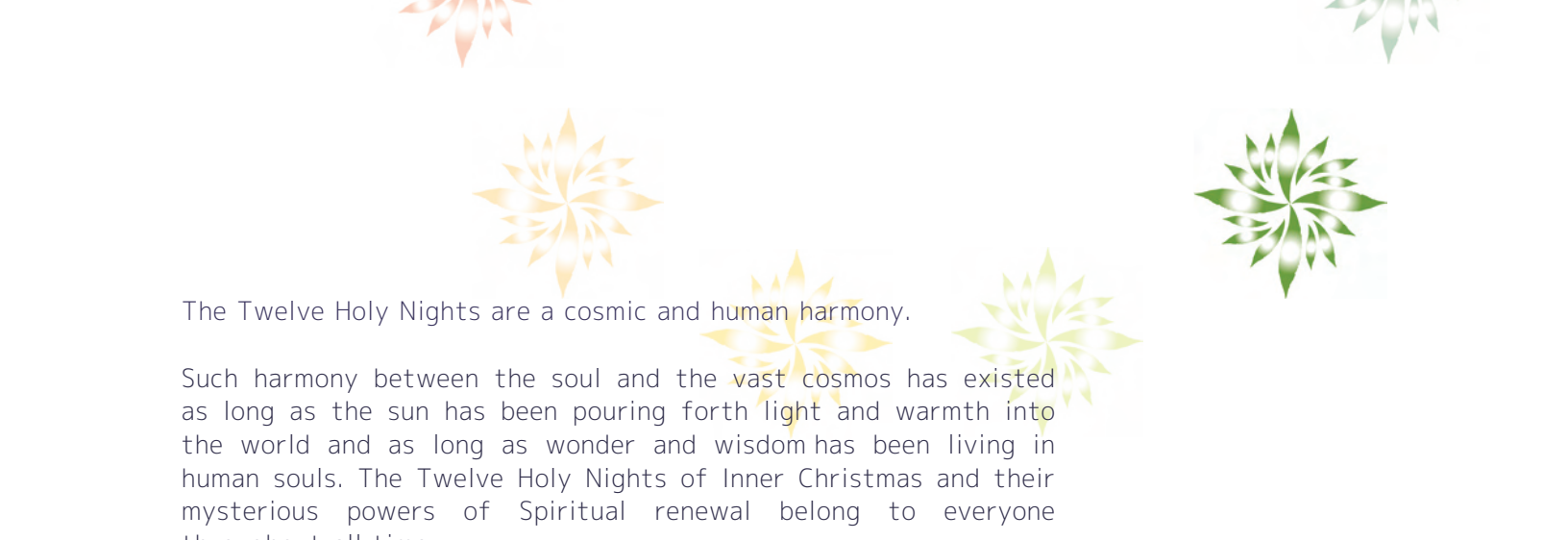
Of all the soul's nights throughout the year, the richest and most meaningful are the nights that occur between December 25 and January 6. These nights are the time of year when your soul gives birth to a new awareness of sacred self. Devoted to the Divine within, they are the Twelve Holy Nights. These soul nights bring new freedom, new awareness, new compassion and new forces for the coming year. The Twelve Holy Nights renew your innocence and increase your wisdom.

Inner Christmas occurs every year between dusk on December 25 and dawn on January 6. 353 days and nights of attention to the matters of our earthly lives have passed. The sun has moved through the 12 great constellations of the Zodiac. For twelve nights we restore and spiritually evolve our being. But not 12 ordinary nights...Twelve Holy Nights.

What makes these 12 nights holy? During these 12 nights the veils between the earthly world and the spiritual world and between our earthly nature and our spiritual nature lift or thin and the light of the spirit shines brightly into human souls. Our attention to earthly nature dims. Normal distractions fade. The spirit within our souls touches the Divine Source and we more clearly perceive the Spiritual World. At the same time the Spiritual World more clearly sees our striving humanity and receives the gifts we offer.

Yes, we mere mortals bring gifts to the Spirit; gifts dearly received. Each time we think a new thought with intensified imagination, each time we feel a new feeling with morally sensitive compassion and each time we act with courageous freedom in un-selfish service for the future, we create a gift for the Spiritual World.

There is no earthly scientific proof of the reality and importance of the Twelve Holy Nights. But experiential proof exists. That proof lies in the personal experience of each human soul. That proof appears in the silent longing of your soul for something more than presents, parties, gifts, food and midnight masses. Your own inner truth is proof enough.



The Twelve Holy Nights are a cosmic and human harmony.

Such harmony between the soul and the vast cosmos has existed as long as the sun has been pouring forth light and warmth into the world and as long as wonder and wisdom has been living in human souls. The Twelve Holy Nights of Inner Christmas and their mysterious powers of Spiritual renewal belong to everyone throughout all time.



The Mysterious Meanings of Twelve

Numbers are mysterious. Each number has a meaning and a special significance that we can discover by how the number appears in human and cosmic wisdom. Twelve is a very special number and appears in many aspects of the Cosmos and human consciousness. Here are a few examples and their relevance to the Twelve Holy Nights:

Governance

Twelve is the number connected with earthly and spiritual systems of governance, leadership and guidance as in 12 jurors, 12 apostles, 12 gates to New Jerusalem, 12-step recovery. Governance provides justice, authority, wisdom, protection, prudence and compassion.

During the Twelve Holy Nights we increase the governance of our inner lives and outer lives. Through contemplation we enhance our capacity for and awareness of self-justice, self-authority, self-wisdom, self-protection, self-prudence and self-compassion.

Completion

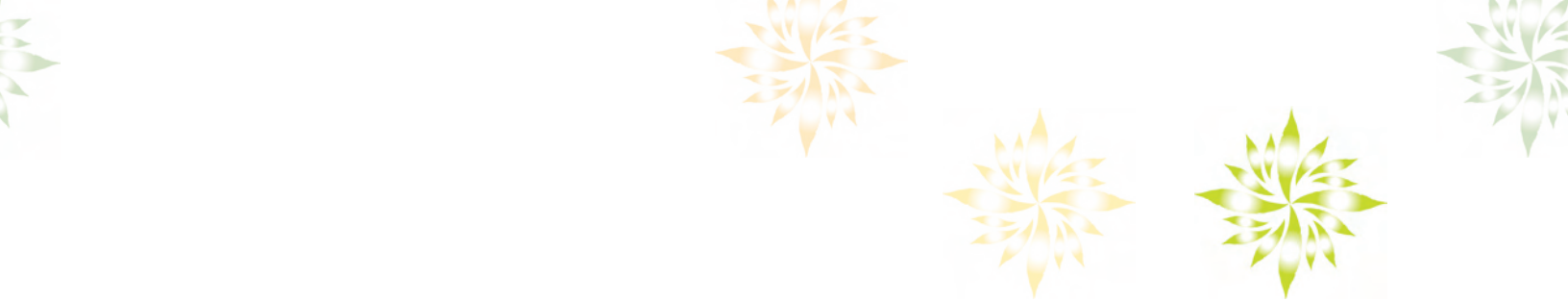
Twelve brings completion to the great cycles of light. Twelve hours complete the archetypal day and night. Twelve months complete the calendar year. The twelve signs of the Zodiac complete the journey of the sun through the celestial landscape. The twelve houses of the astrological chart give the complete picture of the areas of personal existence.

The Twelve Holy Nights complete a year of living and begin a new year. They offer a pause to illuminate the meaning of the year. Each night looks at the balance of light and dark aspects of your life.

Protection

Twelve pairs of ribs embrace and protect our hearts and lungs. The heart is the location of the holy of holies—the dwelling place of personal divinity. The lungs are the organs of restoration and renewal of the blood and breath. The re-enlivening of blood and breath occurs within the protecting embrace of the twelve ribs.

Like our twelve ribs, the Twelve Holy Nights protect and embrace the transformative process of Inner Christmas and the spiritual renewal of our lives.



Perception

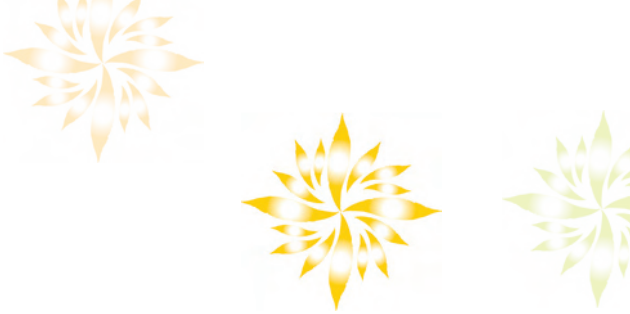
Twelve cranial nerves enter and exit the brain serving as pathways for the perceptions we receive throughout our lifetime. They control most of the motor activity of the senses, such as eye movements, tongue movements, balance and more. The twelve cranial nerves provide you with the experiences leading to our “world” wisdom.

The Twelve Holy Nights of Inner Christmas provide twelve sources of Spiritual perception that offer the insights of divine wisdom. Each night brings a specific awareness and a specific knowledge.

3 x 4

Twelve is the result of multiplying three by four. Three relates to divinity and four to manifestation. Divinity is found in the Trinity of in many of the world’s great religions eg. in Father, Son and Holy Spirit or Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. Earth, water, air and fire are the creative elements of earthly manifestation. When the divine and the material interact they give birth to the fullness of human experience.

Wherever you look, twelve is a ubiquitous and a sacred number guiding your life and Spiritual pathways. No other number of nights than twelve could fulfill the sacred needs of this holy season.



Guidelines for Celebrating Inner Christmas and Working with the Twelve Messages

As the true place of this activity is in your soul, perhaps it does not matter where or when you read the inspirations. Perhaps only a mood of inner intention is needed. But experience teaches us that a soul responds well to thoughtful design.

The only way to celebrate Inner Christmas is your way. If you think carefully about the form, the place, the environment, the needs of your body, the design and outcome your Inner Christmas glows with your own aesthetic judgment.

Aesthetic judgment is spiritual, emotional and material creative discernment. You have a personal sense of what is truly beautiful. You have a sense of cosmos, of order, and harmony. You know what belongs and what doesn't. You resonate with dynamic proportion and balance asking yourself is this too much, too little or just right? You have no fear of light, shadow or color and find a way to use them to create beauty. You have living confidence in your discernment and are unafraid to let it go, to reconsider, explore other possibilities and come to new judgments of what is aesthetically whole, wise and worthy.

Your aesthetic judgment about your Inner Christmas practice can vary from night to night. One woman uses candles and their placement beginning with one candle on the first night and ending with 12 on the last night to bring an aesthetic quality through light. Another has a compilation of Christmas carols, one for each evening, that she plays before she begins reading her messages. A man writes a poem inspired by each message. A couple gets into bed with a printout of the night's message and they read it out loud to each other and talk about their feelings. For all of them, their practices arising from their personal aesthetic judgment bring a sense of spiritual beauty, harmony and depth.



Here are a few of my suggestions for you to consider as you design your Inner Christmas:

Time :

Create a rhythm for your Inner Christmas and working with the Twelve Inspirations. Our bodies relax when there is consistent rhythm. When we do things consistently, they feel “natural,” i.e., they take on the rhythmical harmonies of Nature. It is best to work with the inspirations at the same time each evening. You may even want to read them before you go to sleep to bring your thoughts into your dreams. With inner work it is often wise to “sleep on it”. You may choose to reread the inspirations upon waking.

Space :

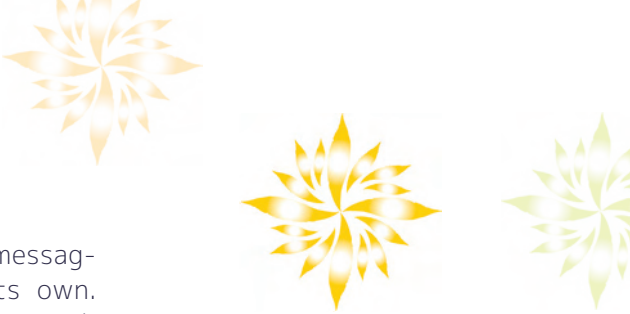
What do you want as the earthly surroundings for this deeply personal Spiritual activity? What colors and forms? What objects and furniture? It may be as simple as a cloth you lay out on a table and a candle you can light. Or you may turn a corner of a room or an extra closet into a sacred sanctuary for your inner work. During the Twelve Holy Nights of Inner Christmas, choose a space in your home where you feel good, safe energy. It does not need to be a place that looks good—it just needs to feel good. Create a comfortable manger for birthing your renewed soul.

Energy:

What are the flowing forces in you and around you? Do you need to purify the space with essential oils or sacred sprays? Do you need to complete the work of your day, do the dishes, fold the laundry, manage your money? Ordinary life continues during the Holy Nights and having fulfilled the ordinariness of your practical life purifies the energy for your inner life.

Candles:

Inner Christmas calls for the warm, living light of candles. A candle’s moving and always upright flame glows with warming radiance. That flame is a metaphor for your Spirit. At the end of your soul’s work, fill your lungs with a deep breath and your soul with deep gratitude, and blow out the candles. Bless the dark night. I urge



you to burn beeswax candles during your work with the messages. Beeswax candlelight has a brilliance and meaning all its own. The flame of a beeswax candle emits more light and more warmth than the flame of candles made from other substances. At Inner Christmas we want to experience the light and warmth of our own inner divinity. Only the candles made from the substance of the bees offer us support for this expression of self. The light and warmth of the honey bees nurture the soul engaging in the sacred work of the Holy Nights.

Journaling:

It is beneficial to write down your thoughts and feelings. Writing has a way of engaging your will and making thoughts active and feelings thoughtful. Plus, you will have a record of your Holy Nights work to return to throughout the year.

Ritual:

A sense of ceremony and prescribed order to your celebration of Inner Christmas. Begin your Inner Christmas with a speaking of a favorite verse or prayer.

Fluids:

Drink a glass of water before you start your inner work and another glass at the end. Water in the body makes the work of the soul flow more deeply into your being. If the body is dehydrated, inner work is greatly limited.

Air:

The body needs to be oxygenated to support inner work. Take a few slow, deep cleansing breaths before and after your Inner Christmas celebration. Please remember that a cleansing breath requires a long exhale.

Personal Energy Clearing:

If you practice energy tapping (www.tapping.com or www.eftuniverse.com), tapping before and after your reading and working with the messages is very helpful.



Music:

Music can be very embracing and protective. Some soft instrumental background music can protect your work from distracting sounds. Or perhaps you want vocals singing of angels and joy.

Openness :

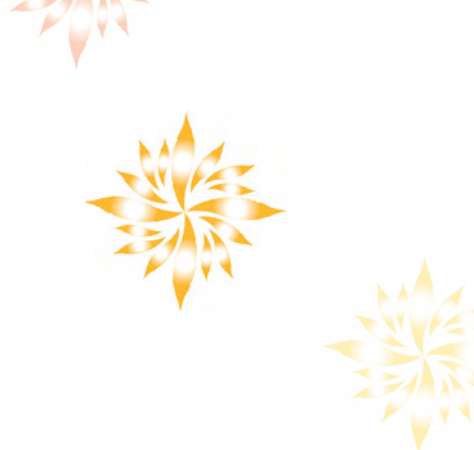
How open or closed is your mood of engagement? Release any prescriptions for the thoughts and feelings you may experience. Simply observe and note what occurs during your contemplation. Attend to your thoughts. Let the inspirations live freely in your soul. Sink into your feelings.

Sharing:

You also may consider sharing your inspirations with others. Though Inner Christmas is truly personal, sharing parts of it with another person or several others can enrich the celebration. Having a nightly Inner Christmas gathering is heart-warming. Or, begin the Holy Nights with a shared reading on December 25 and then have a Thirteenth Night review where everyone shares their experiences.

Revisiting:

It is always a deepening gesture to revisit your Inner Christmas work over the year. You can do this seasonally, monthly, or weekly. I resend the messages on the first of each month. Again, use your aesthetic judgment.



The Messages as Meditative Inspirations

An inspiration is like an unfinished painting.

To experience inspiration, you must look at the painting, you must complete the painting in your imagination and then you see the Truth living in the image.

There are no complete paintings in Inner Christmas. You are the one who completes each painting. You see your truth and the Truth living in each one.

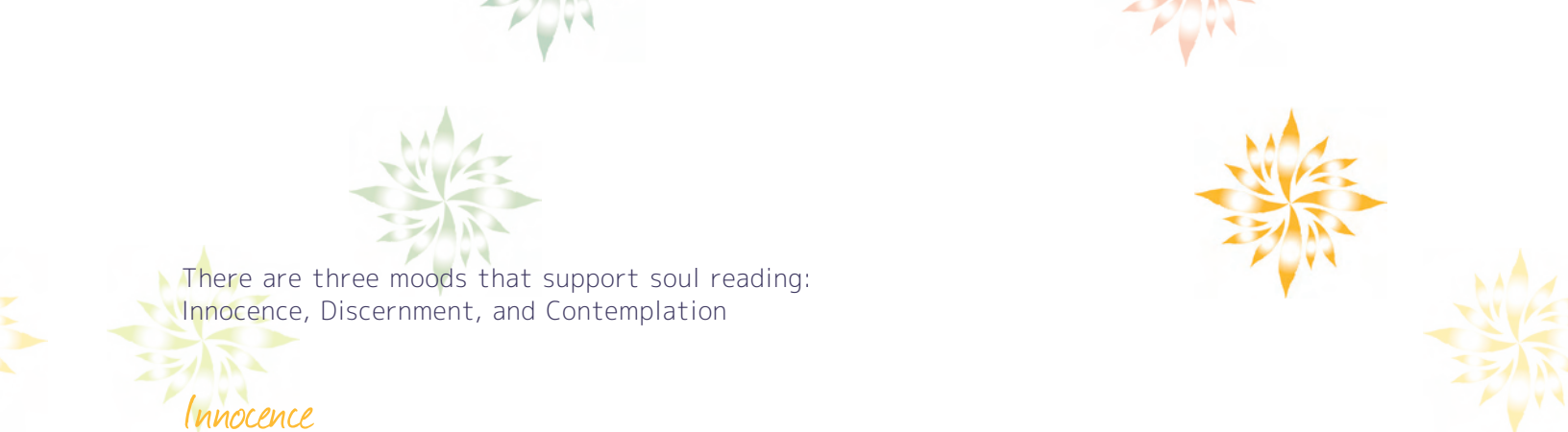
Working with inspiration is difficult for many of us for we were educated to take tests, not to be inspired. We were educated to analyze, not to imagine. We were trained to remain apart from what we worked with and on, not to intimately penetrate and surrender to the experience the object of our study.

I have been inspired to write briefly so that you might be inspired. Find the inspired completion of each message in your inner work. Inner Christmas is a gift you give yourself.

The Inner Christmas messages are written for soul-reading. Soul-reading takes you on a mysterious journey to new levels of awareness and sensitivity. You come to an evolved way of seeing, being, feeling, interacting, expressing or manifesting your self.

School doesn't teach us to soul read. We are taught to read for information and test taking and for entertainment and pleasure. If our souls benefit from this ordinary form of reading, it is by accident or serendipity.

Through soul reading, you seek and explore forces, realities, evolutions, possibilities, mysteries and relationships. Both you and the text grow in meaning, purpose and significance. With soul reading you find unlimited and constant revelation. No matter how many times you read and reread the text, you never receive the same message or insight. You and the text seem to deepen and expand and crystallize.



There are three moods that support soul reading:
Innocence, Discernment, and Contemplation

Innocence

This is the quality of a truly open, undefended mind. You are able to let go of all pre-conceptions, expectations and judgments. This way the content is fully received before you form a relationship to it. The soul does not judge what lies outside it, only what is within. This is such a challenge. Like most of us, you spent your years growing into adulthood developing your intellect, learning to measure, evaluate and assess the data of a phenomenon from a distance before experiencing it.

Or you may read so burdened with expectations and desires for benefit, healing and transformation that you meet the content with the desperate grasp of a drowning man seeking rescue. Innocence allows the content to enter the soul and unfold in freedom. The strength of the content's wisdom is not diminished through struggling with an intellectualized, needy and guarded soul.

Discernment

It is important to understand that an innocent soul is not naive and helpless. You are not an infant. Your adult soul has the capacity to discern truth, beauty and goodness.

It is just that as we read we rarely ask ourselves the three soul questions: "Is there truth in what I am reading?" "Is there beauty in what I am reading?" "Is there goodness in what I am reading?"

Tragically, modern education avoids these questions in favor of definable, provable facts. I don't know that facts have ever fed our souls.

When we have discerned the truth, beauty and goodness living in a text, we must then relate them to our own needs—the complex configuration of our own individuality. What will support, encourage and enable our own development, restoration or transformation.

We must ask "Is the truth, beauty and goodness living in this text for me at this stage of my soul development?"

We know that there is real value in certain foods, yet due to certain chemical configurations certain individuals should not eat a particular food. Thus, for certain reasons unique to you, your soul may need to reject an idea of truth, beauty or goodness in the moment. This often is the cause for that wonderful phenomenon of

the second read and the amazing discovery of different or additional meaning not realized on the initial reading.

Contemplation

This is sacred willed attention. It is a slow metamorphizing thought digestion of the content—the food for your soul. Contemplation begins with wonder—tasting for the new flavor of what we are reading. Much of what our souls hunger for is unknown to us, if we look for what is familiar or already recognized than we will not find our nourishment. Instead we must wonder. Wonder at all we read with our seeking heart. I wish we could all suck at the breast of World Wisdom and grow in our capacity to wonder.

Contemplation savors what emerges as living and evolving in an idea or image. This means it cannot be caged and controlled by the intellect. Please don't collapse intelligence with intellect. They are not the same. Intelligence is alive with devotion to possibility and shapes all meaningful questions. Intellect is a morgue of dissected ideas and mechanized skills. Would you rather be known as having an intelligent mind or as an intellectual? If you ask yourself why one is more appealing than the other you will quickly find the difference between the two appearing in your soul.

Contemplation requires creativity of intelligence, but resists the cleverness of intellect. Contemplation may be like pregnancy—something new and wonderful has been conceived but it will take time and patience before it is ready to be born. Conversely, it is sometimes the case that the mood of contemplation allows for an incredibly quick realization. The lightening bolt of comprehension or transcendence.

Contemplation is essential for the fecundity of soul. It is fruitful and can produce many different insights from a single imagination. If you take a thought into the womb of the soul, many inspirations can form.

The soul reading is the preparation for self-nurturance, self-renewal, even self-birth. You must strive to be innocent, discerning and contemplative. What you are reading came to me because I have been able to grow my capacity to be innocent in my thinking, discerning in my feeling and contemplative in my will as I awakened to this imagination of the soul at Christmas. As I worked with these pictures, I found myself less and less concerned with “my” insights and more and more aware that something in the very soul of Christmas was speaking to me from within my soul.



The Twelve Soul Minutes of Inner Christmas Practice

The spiritual world does not work within the earthly measurements of time. It can provide your soul with great renewal in a mere moment that mysteriously feels like an eternity has passed. Inner Christmas is a nightly practice of inner work that enters the realm of “timeless time,” immeasurable time. In timeless time the celebration of Inner Christmas takes “twelve soul minutes.” Twelve soul minutes are not measured like twelve minutes on a clock.

Twelve is the number of completion so “twelve soul minutes” is however long it takes for you to feel complete with the night’s work.

The “twelve soul minutes” can be spiritually measured as the time it takes for a new light to dawn in your soul illuminating a new aspect of your life. Soul “time” measurement is based on the movement of truth, beauty and goodness in your soul, not the ticking of the clock. You begin the practice in the darkness of soul night and end it with the dawning of a new soul day.

It is a joy to experience the inner Sun rising in your soul.

In the measured and limited time of our busy, chaotic lives it is often difficult to devote any block of ordinary time to inner work. If you can only manage to take the ordinary time to read the Twelve Holy Nights’ inspirations, be glad, and do not feel you are missing the experience. Read the message with your seeking heart.

The love of the spiritual world will meet you in the reading. In this meeting you may find earthly time expands and gives you permission to forget the many demands on your ordinary time.

That said, I would suggest there is benefit in establishing a specific time on each of the Twelve Holy Nights to read the message.

January 6th and The Thirteenth Gift

January 6 is the Night of the Thirteenth Gift and is known as either Epiphany or Three Kings Day. The Thirteenth Gift offers crystallization, a deeper and more luminous awareness of the "I Am" within your soul. With Inner Christmas, January 6 is the night when your soul opens to a new self-knowledge that reflects the glow of Truth, Beauty or Goodness. You experience an inner manifestation of the Spirit dwelling within your soul that alters how you experience and express yourself in the coming year.

Although we approach Inner Christmas through the gate of Nativity and Innocence and move toward Epiphany and Wisdom, the Thirteenth Gift can appear in mysterious ways. The Thirteenth Gift comes wrapped in innocence or wisdom.

The page is decorated with several stylized, multi-petaled floral or star-like patterns. These are scattered across the page in various colors: blue, green, red, and yellow. Some are larger and more prominent, while others are smaller and more subtle. They appear to be floating or falling around the text.

The Thirteenth Gift as Inner Nativity

"I know I'm different, but I don't yet know how." When you give birth to a new you, don't expect to recognize yourself. We greet newborns with attention and warmth, not knowing who this babe will be when he or she arrives at adulthood. If the Thirteenth Gift comes as the innocence of Nativity, receive it as you would a newborn. Give yourself, your soul, warm attention throughout the year and see what emerges.

January 6, the Three Kings Day, celebrates the arrival of the three Wisemen of the East who followed the Star that signified the birth of the King of Kings in the manger in Bethlehem. Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar brought the three gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold to the newly born Divine Child. Your Holy Nights practice may start you on such a journey. You may find an inner star leading you to your inner child of great promise. If you find your way to your inner Divine Child during Inner Christmas, you may find you also bring three precious gifts of inner clarity, inner beauty, and inner strength.

The Thirteenth Gift as Epiphany

If the Thirteenth Gift comes with the wisdom of revealed destiny with an "Ahha!," meet it with inner responsibility and inner freedom. Such a gift is a personal inner epiphany. "Epi" is Greek for "upon" or "seize." A personal epiphany occurs when you are inwardly seized by an imagination, inspiration or intuition about your self and your destiny, bringing you a new mature autonomy and direction. "I Am" is not a noun. It is a verb, active, dynamic, manifest.

In the Christian calendar, January 6 is the day of the Baptism in the River Jordan, when Jesus Christ is recognized and takes up his divine earthly deed. During the Holy Nights our souls long to find new clarity of purpose for our deeds of the coming year. The Thirteenth Gift as epiphany is a recognition, an awakening to a new talent or perspective, a new confidence, a new peace.

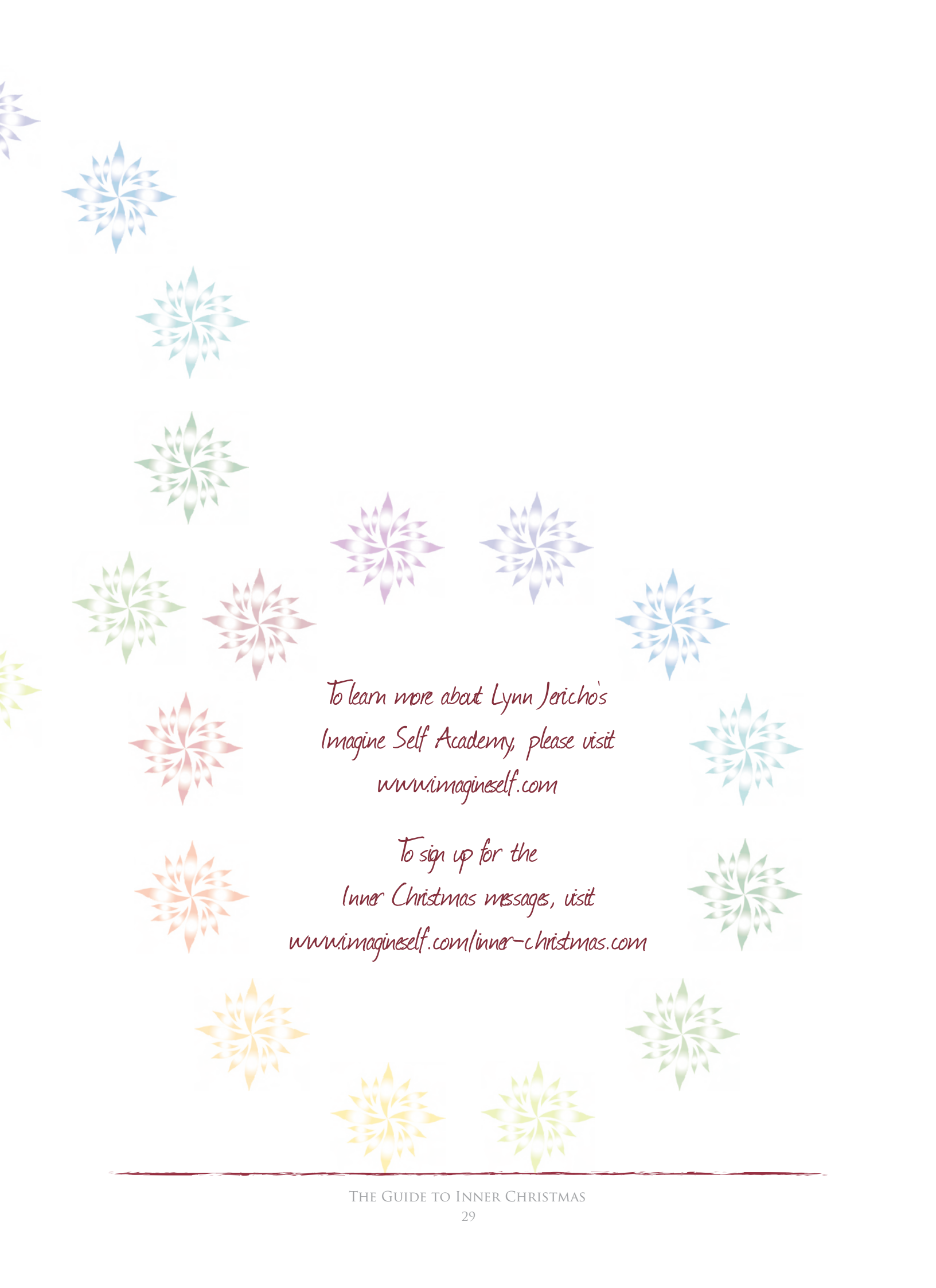
On the Thirteenth Night, reflect on the twelve messages. Which of the twelve inspirations provided a deeper knowing for you? Does it call for any action? Did it alter your relationship to any of the practical or spiritual aspects of your life?

Can you seek in your soul the awakening of a new perception of your purpose? Can you feel a new intention that holds the meaning of your coming year? Do you breathe with new confidence?

Or, do you sense something sweet and fresh budding in your soul? Maybe you hear heavenly music playing in your heart. Sensing, hearing budding and playing are all verbs. Attending to your verbs, vibrant with your will brings vital energy to the coming year. Whether you find new innocence or new wisdom at the close of Inner Christmas, celebrate yourself and your humanity. You have nurtured and enriched your soul in mysterious ways.

But none of this richness of self can be experienced without your attention and your wondering. It is your courageous choice to make a commitment to a path of self-development during the Twelve Holy Nights. The gifts are worth the time, the focus, the inner attention.

Have a true Inner Christmas.



*To learn more about Lynn Jericho's
Imagine Self Academy, please visit
www.imagineself.com*

*To sign up for the
Inner Christmas messages, visit
www.imagineself.com/inner-christmas.com*