

This week, we enter fully into the void season of Winter. It's a time when the natural world slows down, withdraws and rests in a state that can seem sometimes like death. It's a time for going within and allowing space for whatever wants to be born to gestate for a while in patient silence and darkness. Much internal growth takes place during Winter, though the fruits of this growth may not be visible for some time.

Many spiritual traditions also celebrate this time as a season of giving, a time for sharing gifts with loved ones and strangers alike. Although these gifts oftentimes take material forms, the essence of each gift is love and service. Even when we, as gift-givers, aren't fully conscious of this or don't fully embrace our roll as loving servant, we offer our gifts in love and generosity. We hope our gifts bring joy, cheer or laughter. We hope the people who receive them know they're loved or feel supported by our efforts.

Now is the time to consider: What does it mean to be truly loving? What does it mean to truly be of service? It's easy to confuse love with entanglement and service with self-sacrifice, but to truly give of yourself in loving service requires no loss of self or sacrifice. In truth, the opposite is true, for when you offer yourself in loving service, you claim more of who you truly are. Loving service expands, rather than diminishes. And the gifts that are most needed in the world are the gifts you carry within.

As you enter into this season of giving and reflection, consider what it means to bring your whole self into the world in loving service. What would the world be like if each person freely offered their gifts - no more and no less? Even if you don't know what your gifts are, commit to showing up, as you are, in each moment, fully present and with an open heart. When you do, your gifts will naturally flow, in mutual joy.

Take a deep breath, place your hand upon your heart and say,

"I offer my gifts in loving service."