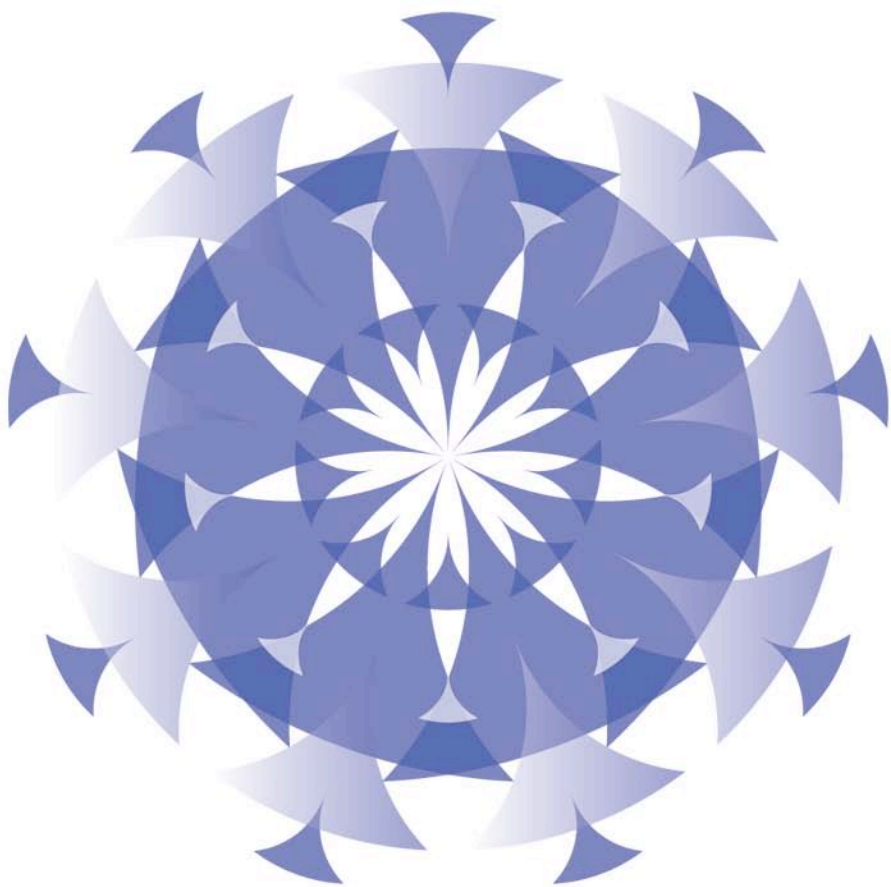


Soul Food



A Time For Renewal

March 2006

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01. To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life.

– *Robert Louis Stevenson*

02. What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly.

– *Richard Bach*

03. **A New Year**

The time of Easter, Passover and Naw-Ruz – all reflective of humanity’s hope for renewal – is the season when people review their beliefs about life and immortality.

Today, when the world around us seems catching its breath in a sense of impending events, is surely a day for reflection and reassessment of our aims and aspirations.

Twenty centuries on, still the sacrifice of Christ and the wonder of the Resurrection is the deepest significance of Easter – a message of hope and joy.

The joy of Easter at the time of Passover, that commemorates the deliverance of Jewish people from oppressors, in the spiritual sense is implicit to all religions and traditions.

The hope of Easter is one of rebirth and renewal and its echo once again can be heard in the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in memory of Naw-Ruz – the Bahá’í New Year on the 21st of March: It is New Year: therefore it is very blessed.

I wish this blessing to appear and become manifest to the end that the old earth may disappear and the new earth appear. The new stars shine and gleam: the new breeze blow. I desire for you that you will partake of this great bounty and that in spirit and heart you will strive and endeavour, until the world of war becomes the world of peace; the world of darkness the world of light; the ruined places become built up; the sword be turned into the olive branch; the flash of hatred become the flame of love of God, and the noise of gun the voice of the Kingdom; the soldiers of death the soldiers of life; all the nations of the world one nation; all the races as one race; and all national anthems harmonised into one melody.

– ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Writings*

04. “How does one become a butterfly?” she asks pensively. “You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.”

– *Trina Paulus, Hope for the Flowers*

05. A Time for Everything

Look to this day,
For it is life,
The very life of life.
In its brief course, lies all
The realities and verities of Existence,
The bliss of growth,
The splendour of action,
The glory of power;
For yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well lived,
Makes every yesterday a dream
Of happiness,
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore, to this day.

– *Sanskrit Proverb*

06. There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

– *Ecclesiastes 3*

07. Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banner of unity... and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one. This is the time for growing, the season for joyous gathering...

– *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’í Writings*

08. A Dedication for You

I urge you to trudge not through life leaving ugly gashes,
to tiptoe not through life leaving half-formed impressions,
but to tread gently, lovingly and purposefully,
leaving graceful heart prints.

– *Unity Dow, High Court Judge - Botswana*

09. You

Are a part of the Great Spirit.
You
Are perfection.
Yet you have allowed others
To place limitations upon you.
Now is the time of awareness.
Now is the time for remembrance.
You have chosen this.
No other
Can choose it for
You.
Trust yourself.
Trust your own knowing.
Take it by the hand and follow it.
Listen and you will hear
The silent voice
That speaks to you
From your heart.
Follow it
And you will know
Great beauty.

– *From the words of Clear Water*

10. Many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires.

It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

It is a fact of the human condition that each shall, like a meteor – a mere brief passing moment in time and space – flit across the human stage and pass out of existence.

– *Nelson Mandela (address to the Joint Session of the House of Congress, 26th June 1990.)*

11. Do ye know in what cycle ye are created and in what age ye exist? This is the age of the Blessed Perfection and this is the time of the Greatest Name! This is the century of the Manifestation, the age of the Sun of the Horizons and the beautiful springtime of His Holiness the Eternal One!

The earth is in motion and growth; the mountains, hills and prairies are green and pleasant; the bounty is overflowing; the mercy universal; the rain is descending from the cloud of mercy; the brilliant Sun is shining; the full moon is ornamenting the horizon of ether; the great ocean— tide is flooding every little stream; the gifts are successive; the favours consecutive; and the refreshing breeze is blowing, wafting the fragrant perfume of the blossoms. Boundless treasure is in the hand of the King of Kings! Lift the hem of thy garment in order to receive it.

If we are not happy and joyous at this season, for what other season shall we wait and for what other time shall we look?

– *'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Writings*

12. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

– *St. Matthew, Christian Teachings*

13. The disciples said to Jesus, “Tell us how our end will be.”

Jesus said, “Have you discovered, then, the beginning, that you look for the end? For where the beginning is, there will the end be. Blessed is he who will take his place in the beginning; he will know the end and will not experience death.”

“Blessed is he who came into being before he came into being. If you become my disciples and listen to my words, these stones will minister to you. For there are five trees for you in Paradise which remain undisturbed in summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever becomes acquainted with them will not experience death.”

– *Nag Hammadi Library, The Gospel of Thomas*

14. A reflection on Gravity and Flight by J.A. McLean

Everyone has two contending tendencies of soul. One is to fly. The other is to remain grounded. The desire for flight is a longing for spiritual freedom, a yearning after brilliance, to know fire and light, to soar in the rarest of climes. It is to be Icarus. When we experience gravity, we seek the cool darkness of the night season. We experience desire. We want to be held down, to mix with the earth and the elements, to remember that we are made of blood and bone, to take delight in the flesh.

Gravity is not materialism or gross sensuality. It is connectedness to earth mother. It is recalling our origins in the womb, of being nurtured at our mother's breast, remembering that we have come from the matrix of life. It is a desire to return to the source and as medieval pilgrims once did in the great cathedrals of Europe, seek sanctuary and protection. Gravity is knowing that only through the body and the senses can the spirit express itself. Gravity says that the body takes on qualities of soul, that the soul becomes flesh, that it seeks the heart's other half, the animus/anima.

But gravity can become a prison. We can easily become enmeshed in gravity. If the bird of the soul flies too low, it becomes trapped in the fowler's net. Then it flutters helplessly until it is either consumed or released by the fowler. Gravity can become addiction in its many forms, 'the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire' in the frenetic, inverted search for peace.

We must learn to walk a tightrope between two worlds, to dance between heaven and earth, to walk on air and return gently to terra firma. We must learn to raise aspiring, upraised hands to the sky while moving carefully over ground. We must glance heavenward even as we dip our feet into the fast-flowing stream of the source of life. For if we linger too long on earth, our wings will become sullied and we may find ourselves forced to dwell in the dust, unable to take flight again.

We know when gravity becomes life-threatening, for we hear an ominous note of caution being sounded. If the joy that we have sought is followed by sorrow, then we know that we are being overpowered by gravity. If we find ourselves caught in a tournament of fears, when sorrow jousts repeatedly with joy and passion altercates with pain, we are being held fast by gravity. Then we must fly upward again where the air is pure and sweet, and where the sky is clean and blue. As we learn to defy gravity and fly, even as we welcome the return to earth, we shall no longer be forced to dwell in the dust, but shall spread our wings and fly again with ease.

– J.A. McLean, A reflection on Gravity and Flight

15. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way.
I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty.
I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í Writings*

16. When a man expels, O Partha, all desires from the mind, and is satisfied in the self by the self, then is he called stable in intelligence.

He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows and amid pleasures is free from desire, from whom liking and fear and wrath have passed away, in the sage of settled understanding.

Who in all things is without affection though visited by the good or that evil and neither hates nor rejoices, his intelligence sits firmly founded in Wisdom.

– *Hindu, from 'The Message of the Gita'*

17. The Master said: 'Wealth and rank are what men desire, but unless they be obtained in the right way they may not be possessed. Poverty and obscurity are what men detest; but unless prosperity be brought about in the right way, they are not to be abandoned.

If a man of honor forsake virtue how is he to fulfill the obligations of his name? A man of honor never disregards virtue, even for the space of a single meal. In moments of haste, he cleaves to it; in seasons of peril he cleaves to it.

– *The Analects; the sayings of Confucius*

18. A father's advice to his son

The span of a man's life — that is nothing.
But what a man makes of that span —
that is something.

A man must make his own meaning for life —
meaning is not automatically given to life.
Do you understand what I am saying?

– *Chaim Pehitok, from The Chosen*

19. Here is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished:

If you're alive, it isn't.

– *Richard Bach*

20. Earnestness is the path of immortality (Nirvana), thoughtlessness the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die, those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.

Having understood this clearly, those who are advanced in earnestness delight in earnestness, and rejoice in the knowledge of the Ariyas.

These wise people, meditative, steady, always possessed of strong powers, attain to Nirvana, the highest happiness.

If an earnest person has roused himself, if he is not forgetful, if his deeds are pure, if he acts with consideration, if he restrains himself, and lives according to law, then his glory will increase.

– *Buddhist, The Dhammapada on Earnestness*

21. Once, there was a disciple of a Greek philosopher who was commanded by his master for three years to give money to everyone who insulted him. When the period of trial was over the Master said to him, "Now you can go to Athens and learn wisdom." When the disciple was entering Athens, he met a certain wise man who sat at the gate insulting everybody who came and went. He also insulted the disciple, who burst out laughing. "Why are you laughing when I insult you?" said the wise man. "Because", said the disciple, "for three years I have been paying for this kind of thing, and now, you give it to me for nothing." "Enter the city" said the wise man, "it is all yours."

– *Desert Fathers*

22. A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty... We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive.

– *Albert Einstein*

23. To think that human nature cannot improve is a flawed conclusion. Ghandi writes:

We do see men constantly becoming better under effort and discipline. There is no occasion for limiting the capacity for improvement. Life to me would lose all its interest if I felt that I could not attain perfect love on earth. After all, what matters, is that our capacity for loving ever expands...

I have no message to give except this: that there is no deliverance for any people on this earth or for all the people of this earth except through truth and non-violence in every walk of life without any exceptions.

I claim to be no more than an average person with less than average ability. I have not the shadow of a doubt that anyone can achieve what I have, if that person would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.

– *Mohandas Gandhi*

24. Be generous in prosperity and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, and answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgement, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í Writings*

Please join us for refreshments



All Soul Food programs are available for free download from
www.soulfood.com.au

About Soul Food

Soul Food is a monthly event held at the State Library of Victoria, providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes. It features music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various Faiths; indigenous, ancient and modern, from all over the world.

Soul Food is a free community event open to all.

Venue

Village Roadshow Theatrette
State Library of Victoria
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St
(Entry 3, La Trobe Street)

Time

10.30am – 11.30am

Date

Sunday, April 23rd

Further Information

For further information about Soul Food please contact 03 9489 3837 or visit www.soulfood.com.au.

Study Circles

In response to interest from Soul Food guests, the Bahá'í community is now offering a series of regular 'Study Circles' – as an opportunity to further explore subjects related to spiritual development. Study Circles are small, informal groups, and provide an environment in which to discuss meaningful topics with like-minded people.

The first Study Circle is titled "Reflections on the Life of the Spirit", from the Ruhi Study Circle series. It is a three unit study on; Understanding the Bahá'í Writings, Prayer & Meditation, and Life & Death.

If you enjoy Soul Food then a Study Circle may also appeal to you. For more information please contact 03 9489 3837 or email soulfood@netspace.net.au

The Bahá'í Community of Victoria

Soul Food is an initiative of the Bahá'í Community of Victoria. For further information about the Bahá'í Faith please visit www.bahai.org. For books on the Bahá'í Faith and related subjects such as spiritual development, world religion, education and more please visit:

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