



## Program — New Beginning

### January

‘Examine the prayers of the saints of all ages, and you have their faith, their life, their ruling motive, their work.’

*Adolphe Monod*

An hour of reflection in the New Beginning dedicated to the celebration of World Religion Day honouring the spiritual oneness of all the great Faiths.

*From the Baha’i Writings:*

‘From the sweet-scented steams of Thine eternity give me to drink, O my God, and of the fruits of the tree of Thy being enable me to taste, O my Hope!

From the crystal springs of Thy love suffer me to quaff, O my Glory, and beneath the shadow of Thine everlasting providence let me abide, O my Light!

Within the meadows of Thy nearness, before Thy presence, make me able to roam, O my Beloved, and at the right hand of the throne of Thy mercy seat me, O my Desire.

From the fragrant breezes of Thy joy let a breath pass over me, O my Goal, and into the heights of the paradise of Thy reality let me gain admission, O my Adored One!

To the melodies of the dove of Thy oneness suffer me to hearken, O resplendent One, and through the spirit of Thy power and Thy might quicken me, O my Provider!

In the spirit of Thy love keep me steadfast, O my Succourer, and in the path of Thy good pleasure set firm my steps, O my Maker!

Within the garden of Thine immortality, before Thy countenance, let me abide for ever, O Thou Who art Merciful unto me, and upon the seat of Thy glory establish me, O Thou Who art my Possessor!

To the heaven of Thy loving kindness lift me up, O my Quickener, and unto the Day Star of Thy guidance lead me, O Thou my Attractor!

Before the revelations of Thine invisible spirit summon me to be present, Thou Who art my Origin and my Highest Wish, and unto the essence of the fragrance of Thy beauty, which Thou wilt Manifest, cause me to return O Thou Who art my God!

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Most Exalted, the All Glorious, the All-Highest.

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Enter Thou My presence, that thou mayest behold what the eye of the universe hath never beheld, and hear that which the ear of the whole creation hath never heard, that haply thou mayest free thyself from the mire of vague fancies, and set thy face towards the Most Sublime Station, wherein this Wronged One calleth aloud: "The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Praised!" We fain would hope that through thine exertions the wings of men may be sanctified from the mire of self and desire, and may be made worthy to soar in the atmosphere of God's love.

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I address myself to Thee, Ahura Mazda, to Whom all worship is due. With outstretched arms and open mind and my whole heart, I greet Thee in spirit. Turn Thy countenance towards me, dear Lord, and make my face happy and radiant.

My heart yearns for Thee with a yearning which is never stilled. Thou art my most precious possession, greater and grander, lovelier and dearer by far than the life of my body and the life of my spirit. My joy is in Thee, my refuge is in Thee, my peace is in Thee. Let me live before Thee and with thee and in thy sight, I humbly pray.

*Zoroastrianism: The Ahunovati Gatha*

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My Soul hearken unto me!  
Love the Lord as the lotus loves water  
Buffeted by waves its affection does not falter.  
Creatures that have their being in water,  
Taken out of water, die.

My soul if thou hast no such love  
How wilt thou obtain release?  
If the Word of the Guru is within us  
We shall accumulate a store of devotion.

My soul hearken unto me!  
Love the Lord as a fish loves water.  
The more the water, the greater its joy,  
Greater the tranquillity of its body and mind.  
Without water it cannot live one watch of the day,  
Only God knows the anguish of its heart.

My soul hearken unto me!  
Love the Lord as water loves milk.  
It takes on the heat, boils and evaporates before the milk can suffer.  
He alone unites, He alone separates,  
He alone bestows true greatness.

*Sikhism*

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Blessed is the spot,  
And the house,  
And the place,  
And the city,  
And the heart,  
And the mountain,  
And the refuge,  
And the cave,

And the valley,  
And the land,  
And the sea,  
And the island,  
And the meadow,  
Where the mention of God hath been made, and his praise is glorified.

*Baha'u'llah*

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*A Reflection from Kahlil Gibran (from The Prophet):*

Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather,  
"I have found a truth."  
Say not, "I have found the path of the soul."  
Say rather, "I have met the soul walking upon my path."  
For the soul walks upon all paths.  
For soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed.  
The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals.

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*The Baha'i Writings:*

The holy manifestations Who have been the sources or Founders of the various religious systems were united and agreed in purpose and in teaching.

Abraham, Moses, Zoroastria, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah are one in spirit and Reality. Moreover, each Prophet fulfilled the Promise of the One Who came before him and, likewise, each announced the One Who would follow.

Consider how Abraham foretold the coming of Moses, and Moses embodied the Abrahamic statement. Moses prophesied the Messianic cycle, and Christ fulfilled the law of Moses.

It is evident, therefore, that the Holy manifestations who founded the religious systems are united and agreed; there is no differentiation possible in Their mission and teachings; all are reflectors on reality, and all are promulgators of the religion of God.

Why not put an end to this religious strife and establish a bond of connection between the hearts of men? Why should not the followers on one religion praise the Founder or Teacher of another?

Inasmuch as our God is one God and the Creator of all mankind, He provides for and protects all. We acknowledge Him as a God of kindness, justice and mercy. Why then should we, His children and followers, war and fight, bringing sorrow and grief into the hearts of each other?

God is loving and merciful. His intention in religion has ever been the bond of unity and affinity between humankind.

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Religious strife, throughout history, has been the cause of innumerable wars and conflicts, a major blight to progress, and is increasingly abhorrent to the people of all faiths and no faith. Followers of all religions must be willing to face the basic

questions which this strife raises, and to arrive at clear answers. How are the differences between them to be resolved, both in theory and in practice? The challenge facing the religious leaders of mankind is to contemplate, with hearts filled with the spirit of compassion and a desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and to ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility before their Almighty Creator, submerge their theological differences in a great spirit of mutual forbearance that will enable them to work together for the advancement of human understanding and peace.

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As the new millennium dawns the world is still warming up to ideas of cooperation and sharing at all levels.

Several major events have heralded this movement around the world, including the Parliament of the World's Religions, first held in Chicago more than a century ago in 1893. The centenary conference in 1993 produced a statement of global ethics.

The 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions was charged with building on those ethics and translating dialogue into action. It not only made history as one of the largest gatherings of the world's religions but for its conviction that humanity today is witnessing a new era in its history that dictates the necessity for all peoples to become partners in a common struggle to build a better world.

After readings, presentations and music, senior representatives of the Faith communities recited an Act of Commitment to mark the year 2000. The recitation was led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rt Hon Dr George Carey.

The Act of Commitment states: *"In a world scarred by the evils of war, racism, injustice and poverty, we offer this joint Act of Commitment as we look to our shared future. We commit ourselves, as people of many faiths, to work together for the common good, uniting to build a better society, grounded in values and ideals we share: community, personal integrity, a sense of right and wrong, learning, wisdom and love of truth, care and compassion, justice and peace, respect for one another, for the earth and its creatures. We commit ourselves, in a spirit of friendship and cooperation, to work together alongside all who share our values and ideals to help bring about a better world, now and for generations to come."*

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**From the well-loved classics of the world faiths to the wise words of indigenous traditions, this is a unique treasury of prayers to enrich the soul.**

And how, you ask, are we to walk the spiritual path? We answer: say little, and love much; give all; judge no man; aspire to all that is pure and good.

*Native American Tradition: White Eagle*

If grains of sand can become a reflection of the divine, just think of what can happen to the human being.

*The Dalai Lama*

Man is made for the contemplation of heaven, and is in truth a heavenly plant, to come to the knowledge of God.

*St Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks*

Like the bee gathering honey from different flowers, the wise man accepts the essence of different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions.

*Hinduism: Srimad Bhagavatam*

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and attain His Presence.

*Baha'i Faith: Gleanings 29*

O Man! Verily you are ever toiling on toward your Lord – painfully toiling – but you shall meet Him You shall surely travel from stage to stage.

*Islam: Qur'an 84.6, 19*

Train yourself in godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

*Christianity: 1 Timothy 4. 7-8*

Man was meant to realise the divine potential within him. He misses the mark when he fails to do such. He has attained salvation when he achieves his full spiritual potential as a human being, created in the image of God.

*Roland B Gittlesohn, The Meaning of Judaism*

The way of heaven has no favourites. It is always with the good man.

*Taoism: The Way of Lao-Tze*

One day a man asked a sheikh how to reach God. "The ways to God," the sheikh replied, "are as many as there are created beings. But the shortest and easiest is to serve others, not to harm others, and to make others happy."

*Abu Sa'id*

My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.

*Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man*

I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul...I know God is neither in heaven nor down below, but in everyone.

*Mohandas K Gandhi*

True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness.

*Albert Einstein*

A religious man is guided in his activity not by the consequences of his action, but by the consciousness of the destination of his life.

*Leo Tolstoy, Confessions*

## **Prayer for Unity**

O my God! O my God! Verily, I invoke Thee and supplicate before Thy threshold, asking Thee that all Thy mercies may descend upon these souls. Specialise them for Thy favour and Thy truth.

O Lord! Unite and bind together the hearts, join in accord all the souls and exhilarate the spirits through the signs of Thy sanctity and oneness. O Lord! Make these faces radiant through the light of Thy oneness. Strengthen the loins of Thy servants in the service of Thy kingdom.

O Lord, Thou possessor of infinite mercy! O Lord of forgiveness and pardon! Forgive our sins, pardon our shortcomings and cause us to turn to the kingdom of Thy clemency, invoking the kingdom of might and power, humble at Thy shrine and submissive before the glory of Thine evidences.

O Lord God! Make us as waves of the sea, as flowers of the garden, united, agreed through the bounties of Thy love. O Lord! Dilate the breasts through the signs of Thy oneness and make all mankind as stars shining from the same height of glory, as perfect fruits growing upon Thy Tree of Life.

Verily, Thou art the Almighty, the Self-Subsistent, the Giver, the Forgiving, the Pardoner, the Omniscient, the One Creator!

*'Abdu'l-Bahá*