

Your Infinite **ESSENCE**

A Journey into Spirit



By Sacredise.com

Your Infinite ESSENCE

A Journey into Spirit

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Johannesburg



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A Journey into Spirit

How do you make Ordinary time extraordinary?

For those who lead worship gatherings (in-person or online) in faith communities around the world, Sundays come around with a relentless regularity. Sometimes that continuity is inspiring and energising, particularly in the joyful festivals of the Liturgical Calendar. But when it comes to the second half of the year—when we enter into Ordinary Time—it can feel like we've used up all our inspiration. In these times, every Sunday can become a struggle as we strive, once again, to design a spiritual practice for our community that is inspiring, transforming and faith-building.

And that's why I am so excited to offer you this new Liturgical Guide: ***Your Infinite Essence***. This seven week series is designed to give you everything you need to make the transition from Pentecost to Ordinary Time creative, inspiring, and meaningful. The focus of this guide is on the work of Spirit in our lives and how we can be more deeply immersed in Spirit's presence.

The seven weeks of this guide are based on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for Year B from Pentecost Sunday to Proper 9B. But the particular approach adopted in ***Your Infinite Essence*** adds a wonderfully different perspective to these readings and how they can speak into our lives.

With prayers, reflections to inspire and guide your preaching, a Table Liturgy for the Eucharist and guides for small groups and personal devotions (below), ***Your Infinite Essence*** will empower you to make the first weeks of Ordinary Time just as creative and inspiring as any of the great festivals of the year.

A Note on the Foundations of this Guide

Your Infinite Essence is designed especially for progressive communities and seeks to give us a new way to engage with Spirit and experience Spirit's presence in our own lives. Each week focusses on one aspect of our lives and invites us to recognise how we can connect with Spirit within our humanness, our embodiedness, and the daily realities of life.

The seven themes of ***Your Infinite Essence*** are drawn from the Hindu wisdom that we each have seven energy centres or chakras within us. Depending on your community you may wish to make the connection with the chakras part of the experience, or you may prefer to present the insights of this series without referencing the Hindu teachings that have informed it. This guide enables you to adopt either approach comfortably. Each chapter includes a short description of how the themes relate to the chakras, but you can leave this information out without it negatively affecting the impact of the journey.

Each energy centre or chakra is represented by one of the colours of the rainbow. For this guide, the chapters adopt the colours for each theme, and you may find it helpful to have a set of seven candles (one each of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet) as part of your decor for the series. You are invited to light the candle for the week as part of each week's preparing movement. I recommend that the candles from the previous weeks be lit at the start of the worship so that the seven candles are lit in succession through the series.

For Small Groups

I have not created separate small group notes for each chapter because, in my experience, the best format for a small group is to engage more deeply with what has happened in the larger worship gathering. I believe that congregational worship forms the fountainhead of spiritual practice and personal and small group worship should flow from it.

I recommend that small groups begin with a kind of 'accountability' moment, in which members share how they are each following the response and integration practices for the week in their own personal



devotional times. They can share any struggles or questions, and also encourage each other in their practice.

The group can then 'replay' the worship from Sunday, in the sense that they can use the same prayers, hymns, and readings, but in a more participatory, conversational way. In reflecting on the Scriptures, each one can bring what they heard in the sermon, and what they have been learning as they have reflected through the week so far. This can then lead to a conversation in which members can encourage each other and learn together. The following questions can be helpful to guide these conversations and can be applied to every week:

1. What stood out for you in this week's reading, and in the message that was preached? Why do you think this particularly caught your attention?
2. What does this 'word' mean to you for your spiritual walk in the next week, month, and year?
3. How are you working to integrate this 'word' into your daily living?

Finally, members of the group can pray and encourage each other, and close with any prayers and hymns from Sunday that they haven't yet shared. In this way, the communal, small group, and devotional worship all works together to lead people into a deeper discipleship.

For Personal Spiritual Practice

The best devotional practice is inseparably connected with both corporate worship and small group reflection. Instead of following a completely different resource, or having to wade through even more words, it is more effective for us to return to the words that we have already heard and received in our communal worship and reflect more deeply on them. And then we can engage with what we are learning practically by repeating the response practices from our Sunday worship, and by being intentional about integrating our learning into our lives in practical ways through the integration practices that are offered at the close of each week's worship. This is the approach that is embraced in ***Your Infinite Essence***.

In order to facilitate this devotional approach in your congregation, I recommend that you give people some way to remember the message they have heard in the preaching—by encouraging them to take their own notes, or by handing out pre-printed summary notes. In addition, it can be helpful to ensure that the response and integration practices are available for easy reference so that people can engage with them during the week. This can either be included in the handouts, or people can be invited to write the practices down before they leave the worship.

Alternatively, social media can also be used to engage people more deeply with these practices in their own time, and video or audio recordings of the sermon can be included as well.

I hope that ***Your Infinite Essence*** will empower you to create a meaningful and transforming spiritual journey for your community. I hope that you and your community will find that you are more deeply aware of the presence and work of Spirit in your lives and that you are able to dive more deeply into the life of Spirit that is available to us all.

Ordinary Time does not have to be routine or commonplace. There is so much to explore and learn as we seek to apply the Christ story of the first half of the year to our own lives. Ordinary Time—or Kingdom Time as it is also called—is always meant to challenge us to live the way of Christ in our own unique situations and relationships. ***Your Infinite Essence*** is based on that principle and each week calls us into a deeper commitment to live the life of Spirit not just for our own sakes, but also for the sake of others.

May ***Your Infinite Essence*** be just the inspiration you need to make your Ordinary Time Extraordinary!

John



Your Infinite Essence is...SAFE

Chapter One: Pentecost Sunday

PREPARING

CALL TO WORSHIP

Begin with a moment of silence and centring. Invite everyone to still themselves, close their eyes, open their hands, slow their breathing, or bring their awareness to the present moment in any way that is helpful for them.

After a few moments invite everyone to consider any areas in their lives where they may feel unsafe in any way. Give them a moment to invite Spirit into their lack of safety.

After allowing a few moments of reflection, light the first (red) candle on your altar or display. The following prayer may be used as a call to worship:

Although we long for safety,
we seldom feel truly secure;
There is so much in our world that is threatening,
disturbing, and frightening;
And we know what it is to be hurt,
betrayed, and vulnerable.

But in this moment we turn our awareness to you, Divine Spirit;
We open our hearts to your presence
and we invite a new Pentecost into our lives.

As we worship, may your Mighty Wind blow
fear's confusion and turmoil from our minds;
May your Living Water wash away
the flights of imagination that undermine our courage
And may your Holy Fire consume
any desire to seek safety by violating the boundaries of others
or by withdrawing from the world.

As you fill us again with your comforting presence
may we know security of soul
no matter what we may face in our world.

Amen.

PRAISE AND CONFESSION

In our world, God, security is sought
through force of arms,
surplus wealth,
or connection with powerful people;
and yet we still feel so unsafe.



*We are unsafe because we create barriers between us,
because we believe the worst about each other,
and because we do not know who to trust,
or know how to create a world that is safe for all.*

Forgive us when our words and actions
make us unsafe for the people around us;
and when we seek safety in what makes us even more unsafe.

*We celebrate that no trauma or grief or death
is ever the last word;
we give thanks that life always grows out of death,
and resurrection is always at work in our lives;
and we praise you, Divine Spirit,
that in your presence we find a safety
that can sustain us even in deeply unsafe times.*

Amen.

LISTENING

HEARING THE SACRED TEXT

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

REFLECTING

What does safety mean to you? What do you need to feel safe? In our humanness we naturally gravitate toward places, people, and things that give us comfort and security. We don't do well when we feel constantly under threat. We thrive when we feel safe, connected, and supported.

As I write this I am in my studio which I call *The Sanctuary*. It's the place where I write, record music, and film most of the videos I produce in my work. It's filled with my musical instruments, some of which have deep meaning for me and connect me to important people in my life, and with images and symbols that I find meaningful and comforting. It's a safe and creative place to work. But it is also a refuge—a place I go to when I need solitude, time to reflect, or just time to rest and feed my soul.

I haven't always had a sanctuary like this. In times past I felt the lack of safety that came with not having a safe place to retreat to when needed. But in the last few years as I've been able to create this sanctuary my soul has grown increasingly whole. When I think about safety, I think about my *Sanctuary*.

What does safety look like to you? What do you need to feel comforted and supported? How can you be more intentional in creating safe spaces for yourself like this?

The safety we seek

I never cease to be amazed at the resilience of women, men, and children. In spite of our best efforts to create safe spaces for ourselves, our world is not safe. Danger and trauma are capable of invading our most secure fortresses. Yet somehow we survive. As Helen Keller courageously observed, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

Our ability to overcome suffering is one of our most remarkable human capacities. While we thrive when we have safe spaces in which to go about our lives, our greatest sense of safety comes from within us. There is no outward refuge that can ever keep us completely safe. But there is an internal safety that can often be enough to sustain us even when there is little security in our world. This sense of comfort and



safety arises when we feel deeply grounded in our bodies, connected with the earth, and immersed in the universe's processes of life.

The source of this internal sense of security is our spirituality. I'm not talking about the practice of praying for an external God to swoop in and save or protect us. I'm talking about the spiritual practices and attitudes that lead us to feel deeply present and alive in our physical bodies. I'm talking about the habits that make us increasingly aware of our connectedness with the earth, its creatures, and the life that is always emerging from death. A true openness to Spirit does not separate us from the physical world, but gives us a deeper sense of our place in the world. And when we have this deep sense of groundedness and connectedness there can be a transcendent sense of safety even when our lives may feel threatened. Most of us have witnessed this internal security in spiritual mentors who face death with dignity, or in saints who cling to non-violence even as they are violently attacked.

In the Christian Scriptures, the account of the Pentecost experience tells of Christ's disciples seeking safety in an upper room. When the Spirit is revealed through their dramatic experience of fire and wind, they rush out into the unsafe world and publicly share their faith and freedom. In the following chapters of the Book of Acts, the religious leaders regularly threaten the disciples with prison, torture, and even death if they don't cease their preaching, but all to no avail. It seems that these followers of Christ have found an internal safety that remains even in the face of persecution.

Perhaps this is something of what Christ meant when he promised in John 15 and 16 that he would send a Companion, Advocate, or Comforter. It seems that a deeper connection with Spirit offers us a deeper internal sense of security, comfort, support, and courage.

NOTE: If it is appropriate in your community, you may want to create a link with the Hindu teaching that the root chakra is a spiritual energy centre within us all that enables us to feel grounded, safe, and spiritually supported. There is a sense here that the Pentecost experience could be a complimentary way of understanding how we find security through connecting with the root chakra and the groundedness it offers.

Finding safety within

It is not often that spiritual teaching, at least within the Christian tradition, empowers us to feel safe. While we may find it helpful to pray for God to protect us, we all know of people who have come to harm in spite of their prayers. The spiritual quality of safety must be more than asking God to be our bodyguard. Within the framework of this reflection, the safety we seek is found in a deep spiritual connectedness with ourselves. When we feel grounded in our bodies, and know that we belong and have a place in the world, we feel safer. When we carry an awareness of Spirit with us as we live and move and have our being, we find the feeling of being present, grounded, safe, and alive that we need.

Here are two very ordinary but effective practices that lead us into this deeper, internal sense of security:

- There is power in being honest about and owning our legitimate needs. The Ignatian practice of examining ourselves can be a helpful tool in learning to recognise what brings us safety and what leaves us feeling threatened. When we have identified what nurtures safety within us, we can be bold and deliberate to do what meets our needs. And as we grow in our internal sense of security, so it strengthens and becomes an increasingly reliable source of support and safety for us.
- Out of this internal sense of security, we can learn to be courageous and firm (yet gracious and gentle) in standing up for ourselves, setting boundaries, and doing what we need to feel safe. This healthy self-protectiveness can be a very effective way to become fully present in our own lives and bring our whole selves into our relationships, work, play, and rest.



Creating safety for others

The spiritual practice of finding safety does not just bring value to ourselves. When we have found an internal security within, we are then able to protect and preserve the safety of those around us. Here are two simple but effective practices that can help our friends and neighbours to feel safer:

- It should go without saying that authentic spirituality calls us to be more aware and attentive of the legitimate needs of others. It teaches us to notice when others are feeling unsafe and to be intentional about doing whatever we can to support their safety. Most of us could be more deliberate in building this awareness of others into our spiritual practice and in offering ourselves as safe companions to those around us.
- We all need people who are safe mirrors for us, and so it can be a profound gift to become such a safe mirror to others. We can invite them to be fully present with us and we can support them as they set boundaries. We can be intentional in respecting their boundaries and in providing a safe, loving environment for them.

The spiritual gift of safety

We speak a lot in Christian spirituality about taking up our crosses, defying death, and being willing to give our lives for justice and love. This is a good thing, but it has become somewhat unbalanced. It is almost as if it has become sinful to seek safety for ourselves and our loved ones. While there may come times when we need to be willing to sacrifice ourselves for the greater good, most of us can do far more good when we feel grounded, supported, and safe. It is both naturally human and authentically spiritual to do the work that gives us an internal sense of security. Once we feel secure within ourselves we are then able to create safe spaces for those around us.

On this Day of Pentecost we remember how Christ's first followers learned to release the external protections they had clung to and found safety in a deep connection with Spirit. We too are recipients of Christ's promise of the Comforter who can support us, teach us, and give us an internal sense of security. May we open to this Divine Companion again and allow her to ground us in our bodies, give us a sense of belonging in the world, and immerse us in the comfort and safety of the Divine embrace.

RESPONDING

INTERCESSION

It may be helpful to spend a moment in prayer. The following, or some other prayer, may be used:

Divine Spirit,
Lead us into the security that comes from knowing
 we are part of the universe and we belong,
that is found in being clear about our boundaries
 and respecting the boundaries of others,
and that expands when we draw on the strength
 and comfort of your presence and love.

May we always seek peace and safety not just for ourselves,
 but also for those around us,
May we reject anything that increases insecurity
 and lack of safety in our corner of the world,
And may your Divine peace fill every space
 where peace is lacking
 and safety has been undermined.

Amen.



MEDITATION

Invite the people into silence and stillness for a few moments. Draw their attention to the red candle that you lit at the start of the worship.

After a few moments invite everyone to meditate on the phrase 'I am safe'. Encourage them to take note of any thoughts, feelings, emotions that come up. Then invite them to release these responses to Spirit as much as possible, while inviting a deeper sense of groundedness and safety to fill them.

If appropriate have a designated space where people can pray for one another if they so choose.

INTEGRATING

As the people are sent out invite them, before they leave, to identify one thing related to today's reflection that they can do to feel more safe and grounded this week, and one thing they can do to be a safer space for others. Encourage everyone to write down the two things they have identified and keep them visible through the week so that they can remember to practice these things each day.

You may want to send the people out with the following challenge:

Stay grounded on the earth and open to Spirit, and go to share safety and compassion in every way you can. Amen.

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of *Your Infinite Essence*
and experience all seven weeks
of this journey into Spirit
[click here to go to the Sacredise Store](#)**

