

THE JOURNEY: A Guide for Reflection

Mystery

(December 2023 | Volume 3, Issue 4)

Everyone loves a good mystery. Who doesn't relish the challenge of putting together the clues to crack the case by the end of the episode, book or dinner party?

Not all mysteries are so neatly sewn up, nor so quickly, though. Some can open us to a more expansive sense of wonder, awe and possibility.

One such mystery was the recently detected ultra-high energy cosmic ray, the Amaterasu particle. Named after the sun goddess in Japanese mythology, it's second only in energy to the OMG – Oh-My-God particle, detected in 1991. Like the OMG, it appears to scientists to have come from an empty region of space where there's nothing high energy enough to have produced it! While the telescope array in Utah's West Desert that identified Amaterasu is undergoing expansion in the hope of catching more of these extreme events, without a conventional explanation, scientists can only speculate as to its source. Super massive black holes? Defects in the structure of space time? Colliding cosmic strings? We'll just have to wait for particle physicists to solve this particular mystery!

In the meantime, we can take a cue from scientists who are exploring new understandings of the universe to open ourselves to novel ways of experiencing our own existence.

As Katherine May suggests in her most recent book *Enchantment: Reawakening Wonder in an Exhausted Age*, "Our sense of enchantment is not triggered only by grand things; the sublime is not hiding in distant landscapes. The awe-inspiring, the numinous, is all around us, all the time. It is transformed by our deliberate attention."

At the close of a very hard year, we need more than ever to lean into the spaces created by ancient religious and spiritual traditions which prepare us to enter into the nourishing dark of longer nights. For it is in the spaciousness that we can be still long enough to simply *be* in the presence of the transcendent mystery, beauty and wonder available to us, if we would simply take notice.

Source of All – Help us to set aside our distractions and to slow down in this season so that we may be fully present to each other and to the mystery in all.

In faith and love,
Angela

Questions to Live With



Photo by Tobias Tullius on Unsplash

1. As you've grown older, has life seemed to have more or less mystery in it?
2. What's the most unprovable thing in which you've placed your faith?
3. Has mysterious "meaningful coincidence" (synchronicity) ever pointed you in the direction you needed to go, right when you were not sure of your way?
4. Do you spend more time treating life like a problem to be solved, a game to be won, a struggle to be survived or a mystery to be lived?
5. If there was one mystery you could have answered/solved before you die, what would it be?
6. If these questions don't address how you need to explore mystery this month, what is your question?

For Inspiration

Hymn #1003 – Where Do We Come From
Singing the Journey

Where do we come from? What are we?

Where are we going?

Where do we come from?

Mystery. Mystery. Life is a riddle and a mystery.

Where do we come from? Where are we going?

Let mystery have its place in you... leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring, and reserve a nook of shadow for the passing bird; keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for an unknown God.

- Henri-Frederic Ariel

About the only thing I understand is this here cornet. You move this finger and you get one note. That finger, and you get a different one. But people are a mystery.

- Meet Claudie, Brit Bennett

Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life.

- Rachel Carson

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science.

- Einstein

Everything in life is leading to deeper and greater love. Love for the beauty and love that is within and all around us. As too, the love for the mysteries unfolding all around us.

- Ulonda Faye

I would rather live in a world where my life is surrounded by mystery than live in a world so small that my mind could comprehend it.

- Harry Emerson Fosdick

You bring yourself before the sacred,
before the holy,
before what is ultimate and bigger than your lone life...

You stand at the edge of mystery,
at the edge of the deep...

Meanwhile, the armful of worries you brought
to the edge of mystery
have fluttered to your feet...

- Rev. Angela Herrera

The great mystery is not that we should have been thrown down here at random between the profusion of matter and that of the stars; it is that from our very prisons we should draw, from our own selves, images powerful enough to deny our nothingness.

- Andre Malraux

Dance as if you got lost in the mystery and beauty of life.

- Debasish Mridha

Remember that you don't choose love; love chooses you. All you really can do is accept it for all its mystery when it comes into your life. Feel the way it fills you to overflowing then reach out and give it away.

- Kent Nerburn

I truly don't know what will happen in my life, and I don't need to know. My life will unfold the way it needs to. Having to know kept me caught in my head. Not needing to know keeps me open to the great mystery of life.

- Mary O'Malley

Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are a part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.

- Max Planck

To be able to marvel at the face of our neighbor with the same awe we have for the mountain top, the sunlight refracting. This manner of vision is what will keep us from destroying each other.

- Cole Arthur Riley

I would rather have a mind opened by wonder than one closed by belief.

- Gerry Spence

Every instant is a new universe.

- Joan Tollifson

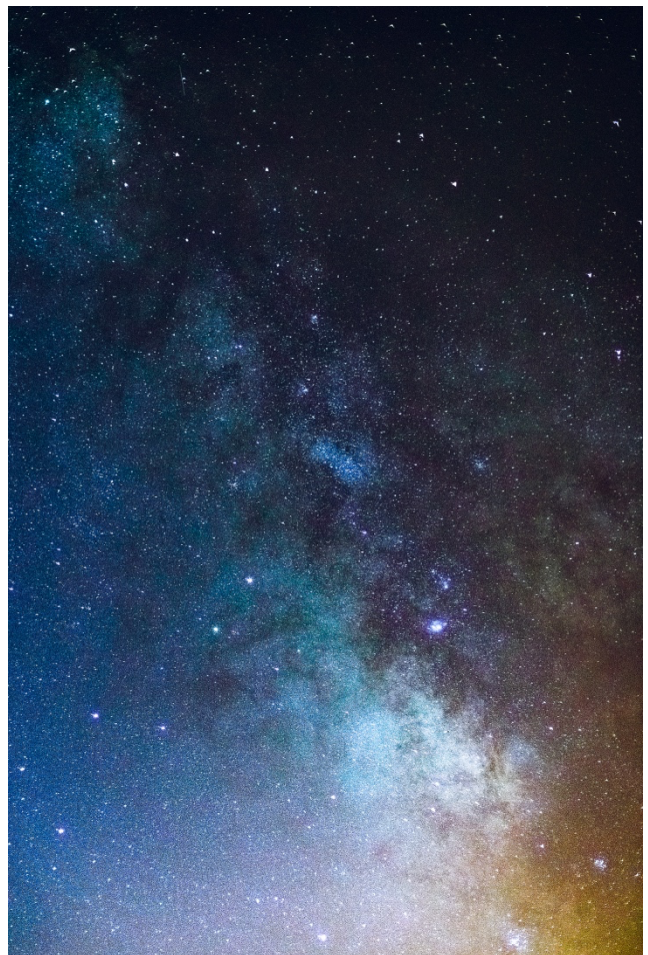


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Optional Spiritual Exercise

Consciously Dwell in Mystery

(adapted from Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat)

To be spiritual is to have an abiding respect for the great mysteries of life — the profound distinctiveness of other souls, the strange beauty of nature – the worlds of flora and fauna – as well as the ineffable complexity of our inner selves, the unfathomable depths of the universe, inner and outer. The wisdom traditions challenge us to live within a cloud of unknowing.

To practice mystery means cherishing the baffling, curious, hidden, and inscrutable dimensions of your existence and the world around you. Live with paradoxes. Give up the idea that you can always "get it."

The practice of mystery enhances our understanding of the complexity of reality. It is an affront to the modern need to have answers to every question ... it lies outside the hallowed precincts of reason and logic. If you sometimes think that answers are wisdom, it may be time to try resting in the riddle of not knowing... try practicing mystery.

1. Discern the questions that seem to you to point toward something mysterious. Take some moments for quiet reflection and continue throughout your day as you hold the question in the back of your mind. In this case, the question is: What are my questions? Perhaps write down several questions in your journal.
2. Repeatedly ask yourself your questions, but without seeking an answer. If an answer pops up, make a note of it and set it aside. Keep repeating the question. The point is not to come up with an answer, but to simply delve into and be with the mystery to which the question points.



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Join Us

Join a Journey Group

Journey Groups are a great way to go deeper with our monthly theme by sharing with small group of people for a couple of hours each month. Groups meet online on Zoom and are scheduled at different times during the month.

For more information, visit our website firstunitariantoronto.org/journey-groups/ or look for the link in *First Light*.

Upcoming Themes

January – Liberating Love | February – Justice & Equity | March – Transformation |
April – Interdependence | May – Pluralism

Upcoming Services | Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

Dec. 3 (only online)
Wonder, Awe and Mystery
Rev. Stephen Atkinson

Dec. 10 (only online)
The Mystery of Community Building
Rev. Victoria Ingram

Dec. 17 (only online)
Inherent Mirth and Dignity
Liz James

Dec 21 (in person only @ St. Matthews United Church)
Winter Solstice Service
Maya Ferguson Klinowski

Dec 24 (In person at Neighborhood UU Congregation and online)
Celebrating at Yuletide
Rev. Victoria Ingram

Dec 31 (only online)
The Year-End Ritual
Dallas Bergen

The Journey Team

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