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- *Doubting is a sign of strength*
- *Jesus' conception and resurrection*

God unites your hearts, your souls, your very lives with one another. Your presence in one another's lives is important and should be cherished. You are not brought to this gathering merely by chance. You are brought through the workings of your guides and the openness of your spirit. Your lives are given character and shape by one another. This character, this shape of which we speak, is also formed in part as the result of your interaction with all that is created by God, not the least of which are other human beings.

You live your lives to question, to propose solutions. You live your lives to experience and share love. You live your lives to learn, to learn those lessons that are of greatest importance. You are not given lives specifically for the purpose of worshiping in a particular way. There is no sectarian worship that is uniquely correct and which by definition excludes all others. Every organized faith has a perspective through which the world is engaged and understood, but that perspective changes and such change is actually an important component of any belief system. Since no human being or no group of human beings contain the necessary wisdom and understanding for ultimate truth at any given moment, it becomes increasingly clear that the need is paramount for flexibility, for change, in order that growth may take place.

You are given understanding because that is a way of beginning your journey toward total union with God. It is why you have life. It is why you choose to experience the events that cross your paths. They do not just happen. You are given your lives so that they may change. Growth implies, growth *requires* change. Is it a risk to contemplate change and to experience it? Certainly it is, but it is a greater risk to shun any necessary changes. As each of you grows your perceptions change, and with those changed perceptions your understandings are also changed. A life that is in service of spirit is a life open to this change. It is not a life dictated and controlled by dogma. When you cease to allow yourselves to change, you eliminate one avenue for growth. The change is important.

As you evolve spiritually, your understanding of spirit and the impact of spirit will change. Institutions that once held you in rapt attention may have shifted and now other modes of thinking and understanding have taken a new place in your lives. That is not a sign of instability, but rather of flexibility. We do not encourage your lives to be unstable, but rather to be flexible. The tenets you hold close to the heart may not be as unchanging and unyielding as you first anticipate. You are asked always to reexamine your course of direction, your sense of focus. You're asked to rethink what you already hold to be the truth. In this problem of rethinking, a process of adaptation arises and unfolds. This process is meant to be embraced by all.

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You have recently celebrated important church milestones, milestones of belief, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or other system that is shared by others. The dilemma that was raised concerning the details of Jesus' apparent resurrection are questions that should be asked by all who choose that set of beliefs which have become so structured in the system of one collective faith community. We can shed some light on that which is celebrated in the Christian world.

It is very true, you can call yourself a Christian and yet not hold within you a very specific understanding as expressed by the church leaders over the centuries. We tell you with full honesty and truthfulness, no human being essentially disappears from physical form in a manner of days without external intervention. The issue of Jesus or anyone disappearing from human view immediately and being raised in the flesh is not the truth of what happened. But there are many who feel that the telling of this story for many centuries provides a basis for relating to the lessons of that person you call Jesus. It is of absolutely no importance whether one believes in physical resurrection or not. What is important for those who view Jesus as central to their faith is that they acknowledge a great spiritual teacher and an example of nonjudgmental love in human form. This is what guides individuals through their lives in that faith tradition. It is not a matter of physical or nonphysical resurrection.

You cannot say that conception is immaculate, for that is not the way in which flesh is born. Understanding scriptural beliefs, understanding what is written about those beliefs, is a matter of asking yourselves, "what is the lesson, what is the point" rather than "what are the details." You can easily be "hung-up," as you say, and completely miss the purpose.

The resurrection as celebrated at Easter is not about a physical resurrection. It is a resurrection of the spirit. It is a transformation of God's energy within an individual. It is not Jesus who alone experiences resurrection. It is the possibility of every human being to be resurrected. This resurrection is a kind of rebirth of spiritual awareness. When you leave gatherings such as this with a new understanding, with a new willingness to be open, with a renewed commitment to listen within, that is a resurrection for that is a transformation of your energies and awareness to a higher level.

Each of you is capable of being born once again, but when we speak of being born again, we don't speak of being "saved" as some religious teachings affirm. Being born again means being recommitted to a desire to understand more fully your place in God's creation and God's place in your creation. That is a pure birth, an immaculate birth, for it is a birth of spirit. All major religious teachings contain some story related to a transformation to an individual or individuals. All religions refer in some form or another to being resurrected—a resurrection in thought, a resurrection in commitment, a resurrection in understanding, a deep-seated desire to look beyond the self, to see beyond the self, and to live beyond the self. That is the true resurrection. When religions

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talk about and teach physical resurrection, it is a way of bringing the concept of transformation into a more clearly accepted representation.

Fanatics of all persuasions take a set of beliefs and carry them to extremes, sometimes destructive, oftentimes not. You are asked in your spiritual journey not to believe blindly but to believe willfully and with thought, to believe through questioning. Faith implies a questioning for it is in questioning that you learn the applications of faith. Without questioning, faith is merely an abstract idea, but not a practice. You are asked to practice what you believe, but you are also asked to pose questions about your beliefs, and it is in posing those questions that your beliefs change, and it is this change that must be a part of growth.

You do not change unless you feel personally motivated to do so. That motivation comes through questioning. Sometimes the questioning is directed to someone else, and other times such questioning is directed within. But question, you must. You are not shaking your beliefs as you question them. You are strengthening them because your beliefs are shifting as a result of your greater understanding.

Do not be reluctant to challenge and question. Allow yourselves the gift of doubting. Doubting is not a sign of weakness but rather strength, for out of that doubting comes a vacuum in understanding. That vacuum will be filled through the new insights that are accumulated and you are then changed, changed in the direction of growth that is appropriate for you.

When you do not question, when you do not doubt, you may feel secure but there is no more room for growth. Faith therefore, and your relationship to God as well, must go through periods of questioning, of postulating, of providing various answers for yourself, some of which will grow into healthy structures. Others will wither away. Not every answer that you find is the final answer. All answers are steps along an extensive pathway. All questions are a means of receiving more answers, of moving further along on your chosen path.

Accept and welcome moments of doubt, moments of unclear vision. Embrace those moments as important to your own growth. Such doubts, such concerns, are never a loss. They all hold the potential for new life, for a resurrected life, for a new birth, a rebirth, the growth of the spirit that you so lovingly seek. Allow yourselves, therefore, the benefit of the search. Don't be complacent with the answers that you have, for those answers have gotten you to where you are and they have served their purposes, but they are not the end. They are part of the process. Be open to the process. Be open to what your spirit seeks. Be open to the answers that spirit finds, and be ready to ask again, be ready to question, be ready to change, and when you do so your growth as human beings and a life that has meaning and benefit for all are assured.

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Have faith in the restlessness you experience. Embrace it and grow through it. Your lives are filled with great warmth and enormous potential. Open your eyes and walk with the light and you shall find your path.

Amen.