

It's the most wonderful time of the year! There is a spirit of joy and celebration

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Dear friend,

Yes, indeed. It's the most wonderful time of the year! There is a spirit of joy and celebration and even wonder in the air, especially for children. We hear Christmas songs on the radio stations, even in stores and malls, some of which are truly uplifting and inspiring. I find myself singing aloud in the car when I am driving by myself, especially the song "Oh Holy Night," as I come from a Christian tradition.

Yet, I remind myself that this is also the time of the year when Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is observed by my Jewish brothers and sisters, and when our African-American brothers and sisters celebrate and commemorate Kwanzaa and the Seven Principles of Life. In fact, I wondered if our Native American brethren also observe a holiday and found that they do often

gather together in public powwows, honoring their ancestors and reverencing Mother Earth.

Looking at the deeper dimension and meaning of each of these beautiful traditions, I can't help but think that each one is in fact meant for all of us to learn from and to enrich our lives with. The Festival of Hanukkah reminds us of the miracle of the candles burning for eight days in a row, testifying to the presence and the hand of the Divine Creator in our lives. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus, who brought us a universal message of love: loving God, our neighbor, ourselves, and even our enemy. The celebration of Kwanzaa teaches us essential principles of life: Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith. And powwows remind us of the presence and honoring of our ancestors and of living in harmony with the earth.



The French Jesuit priest and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin once said that human beings are "mostly spiritual beings, seeking to become human." As such, all people, no matter their color, culture, or faith, long for the nurture and uplifting of our souls that come from experiencing truth, beauty, and goodness, such as are expressed in these various spiritual and cultural traditions.

I therefore would like to invite you during this last month of the year 2019 to tune in to, celebrate, and inherit the essence of these

spiritual traditions and cultures. Doing so will almost certainly bring us all a step closer to seeing peace on earth and good will to all men (and women).

Happy Holidays to all!