

## Reflection:

Holiday rituals and traditions connect families over the generations. Communicating and preserving our memories and stories can revitalize this year's holidays, nourish the souls of those we love, and even encourage family healing and forgiveness.

December days are short, the nights long and dark. Dispel the dark by lighting December with a gift of your love, a legacy letter to share.

**Holy One,  
make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me  
sow love.  
Where there is injury,  
pardon.  
Where there is doubt,  
faith.  
Where there is despair,  
hope.  
Where there is darkness,  
light.  
And where there is sadness,  
joy.**

– St. Francis of Assisi

## Practice:

1. Begin by reflecting about and jotting a simple list of your precious and meaningful holiday memories. You may be prompted by the visual feast of festive decorating, the smell of traditional food, the taste of a grandmother's special baking, unexpected visitors, spiritual words from a holiday service, an old ritual passed down through the family's generations, things (a special holiday plate, a menorah, a tree ornament) that you've unpacked with joy ever since you were a child.
2. Wander through your memories going back in time: from today through mid-age, through young adulthood, through adolescence, all the way back to early childhood... stopping by the way, as on a snowy evening... (echoes of Robert Frost with much to do before you sleep) reminding yourself of the sweet, the comforting, the holy holiday activities, traditions, the history of your family's ways of coming together sometimes from afar to celebrate the season together.
3. You may decide to memorialize a holiday legacy that's come down from grandparents or even before You writing about it may revitalize the practice in your family's holiday activity this year and into the future, perpetuating the gift from an ancestor.

3. Look over your list and choose one thing to write about. Write for only 15 minutes. You can return to your list as often as you decide to write about other memories you've rediscovered.
4. Write the story of your memory: fill in the setting, introduce the people, describe your feelings, and your understanding of the tradition as it has made its way down to you today.

**There are two ways of spreading light:  
to be the candle  
or the mirror that reflects it.  
– Edith Wharton**

5. Take another few minutes to incorporate your story into a legacy letter, introducing the memory as a holiday gift you want to share with someone(s) you love. One way to close the letter is to express what it meant to you then, what it means to you now, and your hope that the tradition and its story will be passed on as part of what you and those before you have valued.

**May your legacy writing  
be a prayer and a gift  
bringing light  
to the lives of those you love  
this holiday season,  
and may your letters be cherished  
always,**

~ Rachael Freed

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