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HAPPY HOLIDAYS from

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## FEEL THE SPIRIT

### Jan Frazier on Divinity, Christmas, and The Presence that is Everywhere

by Kwami E. Nyamidie

Jan Frazier, author of "When Fear Falls Away: The Story of a Sudden Awakening," is a poet, a creative writing teacher and the mother of two young adults. In her book, she tells the story of her cancer scares, her divorce, her financial struggles, and her spiritual practice which ultimately led to a total shift within her being.

I contacted her to find out more about her unusual transformation, about what others can do to experience the awakening, and what this holiday season means to her.

**Kwami: Tell us how you felt at the beginning of this shift that you wrote about so eloquently in your book.**

Jan: My sense of reality shifted. It became so obvious that this presence is everywhere and that it is in everybody. I was constantly having this experience of wondering: why didn't other people have this experience?

I looked at them and I waited to see some recognition that they were noticing the same thing that I was. They weren't noticing, and so part of the learning experience for me was to understand that I was alone in this.

**Kwami: This must feel really lonely. How would you help others to understand this thing to free you from feeling alone?**

Jan: The first thing to know is that the presence is really inherent in all of us. It's everywhere all the time. We can't go anywhere that it isn't also. It's a question of what blocks our awareness of it. And that is the mind.

The key to feeling our real nature is to really be in the moment, to truly be in the present. When the mind is busy thinking ahead of something or before something happens, it leaves no hope of experiencing the present. So the most helpful thing a person can do – and this varies from person to person – is to notice how busy their mind is.

As soon as a person notices: "Gee, I've been thinking an awful lot. Here I am worrying about this; I am planning that..." Whatever the thinking is, just notice that there's a chance that it will quiet by itself, and when we feel our present awareness, it is in that. It's not like the minute your mind quiets you're going to go into this ecstasy. I think it's a mistake when people think of it like it's a commodity or like a prize. It's just to begin to notice how much the mind dominates our awareness and little by little to give it a chance to quiet down.

Go out in nature. Pay attention to the sensations in your body. Pay attention to sensory input. All that stuff does make us aware of what is real in the present. What is real is not what we are thinking about. The truth of this becomes so clear. It's all made up.

And also, don't resist anything. If you feel yourself wanting to hurry up, thinking something or labeling something, that blocks our awareness, and it is so extensive. We have no idea how much we do this thinking and labeling. But once you start to notice how much you are doing it, it lightens up a bit. Little by little you can feel your aliveness, and aliveness is what this is.

**Kwami: The holiday season is a time of liveliness for most**

**people. How do you experience the shift during this time of year?**

Jan: Through singing. It isn't specifically about Christmas. Singing has always been a joyful experience for me, and because of my early Catholic Church upbringing and my brother being a musician, I was exposed to a lot of sacred music.

So I've always felt the expression of the divine through music and that really stayed. Now one thing that happens for me at Christmas time – and this has been very powerful since the shift – is that I listen to and sing the Messiah, which I really love and have performed a number of times. It means quite a different thing to me from what it used to mean.

The whole thing of Christ and all of that is like, I feel I understand it now from the inside rather than responding to a piece of doctrine.

**Kwami: You feel you get the Christmas idea now from inside.**

Jan: It isn't so much about Christmas exactly but about Christ. There is a part of the Messiah – I think it is the soprano – that runs: "Come unto Him, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest."

I can't hear that without tearing up. Even as I'm saying this to you I tear up. I can't say that or hear that or hear the soloist sing that without thinking: "Oh, this is what Jesus meant: that if you get the idea that you don't really have to suffer, then you don't have to suffer."

It is so poignant to me when I



*Jan Frazier says that Jesus's ability to know his divinity was what distinguished him, not the fact that he was divine.*

hear these words because when I'm singing them, I think people don't understand this. And also I think people misunderstand what Jesus meant. Who am I to say what Jesus meant? My feeling about him now is that he knew his divinity: most of us don't know our divinity. He was unusual in that – this is just my understanding – but his ability to know his divinity was what distinguished him, not the fact that he was divine. For the rest of humanity who don't experience themselves as divine, suffering

feels inevitable. What I get out of my music and out of his life is this saying: "Come to my way of seeing things and you will be like me. You don't have to suffer."

*To find out more about Jan Frazier, visit her website at [www.whenfearfallsaway.com](http://www.whenfearfallsaway.com). Kwami E. Nyamidie is a spiritual director. He can be reached through his e-mail, [knyamidie@yahoo.com](mailto:knyamidie@yahoo.com) or his web site [www.kwaminnyamidie.com](http://www.kwaminnyamidie.com).*