

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”

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Dear Friends ~ In this period of cacophonous town hall meetings and bombardment of the senses with advertising, social media, and rhetoric, we as a society seem to have lost the art and discipline of listening. Even if we hear voices amid the noise, it is difficult to open ourselves to whatever may be said rather than pre-judging or selectively listening. Yet if we cannot listen to each other, how can we understand or learn from each other much less work together toward the common good? And if we neglect to practice active listening, how much are we missing in other contexts as well? What waits to be heard not just within our relationships but within our hearts, within our souls, and within our world?



A listening heart is always open, sensitive to the joy and pain of others, offering a space within itself for the other to enter. It gives each person what is so badly needed—an affirmation of their place in this world. ~ Eliezer Shore

The discipline of silence was leading me not only to a keener attention to language but to an improved capacity for hearing. On silent Mondays, I began to listen differently—to myself, to others, and to the world around me. It was a listening I would call both active and without an agenda...I began to observe that when there was no expectation for me to respond, acknowledge, analyze...I listened differently. My ego relaxed... In silence I was hearing others more keenly and witnessing my own thoughts, too, and seeing how they served to separate or to connect me. I was learning not to turn away from the parts of myself that were difficult.

~ from *LISTENING BELOW THE NOISE* by Anne D. LeClaire

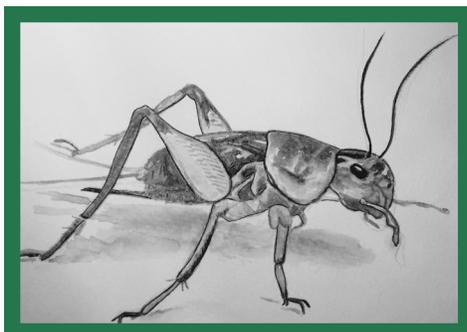
Being prophetic means, first and foremost, being a dangerous listener.

~ Robert J. Wicks

The fundamental premise of compassionate listening is that every party to a conflict is suffering, that every act of violence comes from an unhealed wound. And that our job as peacemakers is to hear the grievance of all parties and find ways to tell each side about the humanity and suffering of the other. We learn to listen with our “spiritual ear,” to discern and acknowledge the partial truth in everyone—particularly those with whom we disagree. We learn to stretch our capacity to be present to another’s pain.

~ from “Just Listen” by Leah Green in “Yes!”, Winter, 2002

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how strange this silence would seem
without these crickets
here to explain

~ William Michaelian,
in *Akitsu Quarterly*, Summer, 2015

Listen in the silence for Spirit's Voice
 guiding your soul
 for service in the great renewal,
 the new creation, the citadel of
 Love here on Earth.
 All are welcome together as One!
 Listen, attune, and heed the inner Voice of Love.
 For in sacred Silence, we open ourselves
 to Wisdom,
 to ever deepening communion with
 the Source of all creation.

~ from LUMEN CHRISTI... HOLY WISDOM by Nan Merrill

No one listens, they tell me, and so I listen...
 and I tell them what they have just told me,
 and I sit in silence listening to them,
 letting them grieve.

~ Julian of Norwich

Monks take a vow of obedience...It means a loving listening: listening to the Word of God that comes to us moment by moment, listening to the message of the angel that comes to us hour by hour. The very word obedience means an intensive listening. The opposite of that obedience is absurdity, which means being deaf to life's challenges and meaning. We have the choice in our life between living with this loving listening or finding everything absurd... So the next time you say, "This is absurd," you might consider the more helpful question, "To what am I deaf here?"

~ from THE MUSIC OF SILENCE by David Steindl-Rast, O. S. B.

...perhaps we will see that listening is not a course you must register for, a new gimmick that will magically transform your social and professional life. It happens when you take time to look around you, to be still in the evenings, startled by mornings. To listen means to be aware, to watch, to wait patiently for the next communication clue. And, as anyone with a speech or hearing disability can tell you, listening is not always auditory communication...When earth's auditory energy is received as a whisper, or perhaps not at all, other senses become sharpened, grasping communicative clues we have forgotten, in the rush of life...Listening becomes visual, tactile, intuitive. Listening...perhaps...is just a mind aware....

~ from LISTENING: WAYS OF HEARING IN A SILENT WORLD by Hannah Merker

I found I had less and less to say, until finally, I became silent, and began to listen. I discovered in the silence the voice of God.

~ Soren Kierkegaard

Ibn Hasdai writing in the 13th century said: "[Man] was given two ears and one tongue, so that he may listen more than speak." It is a privilege just to listen. And there is a fine distinction between "listen to" and "to listen." When we "listen to" we are actively engaging our senses of sound for a particular audible cue. But, when we choose "to listen," we are opening ourselves up to the sounds of silence and solitude; to ways and words unanticipated, unscripted and often—unfamiliar. We do not choose these words; they choose us.

~ Albert Lewis



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Listen
 Now is the earth most still.
 No plows break the bare and frozen ground.
 No creature stirs from its earthbound
 burrow, tunnel, nest.
 Matter is quiet.
 Its clamor
 hushed, we hear the rising of the star,
 the morning light,
 the seed within itself unfolding,
 glowing, growing.
 All is quiet and the earth most still.

~ "Listening" by Annabel Keely