

Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ Far too many people in today's world seem intent on defining what they believe everyone must have faith *in* as if they alone had captured The Truth. One's faith must pass their litmus test in order to be real or valid or redeemed. Looking back through history at the inquisition, the crusades, the Pharisees and Romans, the suppression of the Sufis and countless other persecutions reminds me that it has often been this way. Yet if God is truly holy, then taking off our shoes and bending in awe might be a better response than looking from side to side to take inventory of who's there and who's not. I find it hard enough to have faith without people co-opting and abusing it in the name of their own fundamental righteousness. What is faith if not hope in the unseen? And if unseen, then how can we lock down The Truth as if we know it? It is human nature to fear uncertainty, confine paradox, and hammer away at ambiguity with our doctrines and creeds. Faith asks at least a thimbleful of humility, a cherishing of mystery, and a willingness to live with unknowing.



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...don't worry about what is reality,
or what is plain, or what is mysterious.
If you were there, it was all those things.
If you can imagine it, it is all those things.
Eat, drink, be happy.
Accept the miracle.
Accept, too, each spoken word
spoken with love.

~ from "Logos" by Mary Oliver, in *WHY I WAKE EARLY*

There is no progress in prayer without progress in faith, a purification of faith. And this entails the removal of all the props which depend on human endeavor, human reasoning, signs and the rest. It is the naked faith which is a terrifying experience and yet is the meeting point ultimately between God and ourselves in the depth of our being. This experience of the purification of faith is not normally one which comes early in the spiritual life. We must learn to wait. ~ Basil Hume

The function of faith is not to reduce mystery to rational clarity, but to integrate the unknown and the known together in a living whole, in which we are more and more able to transcend the limitations of our external self.

~ from *NEW SEEDS OF CONTEMPLATION* by Thomas Merton

The small truth has words that are clear;
the great truth has great silence.

~ Rabindranath Tagore

Real faith is rooted in a basic unknowing about ultimate things, and religion helps us to be in relation to that mystery. This kind of unknowing can offer calm or create anxiety, depending on a person's faith. Often people fill in this emptiness by insisting that they possess the truth. The fragility of their faith is betrayed by their strident insistence on being right and by their efforts to force their views on others. They seem afraid of the very things that define religion: mystery and trust.

~ from *THE SOUL'S RELIGION* by Thomas More



Sometimes I wondered if
I had any faith.
I sat down and thought about it.
And when I had had enough
of that I got up
and went on my way.
And that—the getting up
and going—was faith.

~ from *YES, WORLD* by Mary Jean Iron, as reprinted in
AN ALMANAC FOR THE SOUL by Marv and Nancy Hiles

There are mountaintop experiences for some, and thin places for very many. But underlying them—and making them possible—are the faithful moments, the faithful hours, and the faithful days which make up a lifetime of actively seeking to allow God’s love to live in us and through us.

~ in “Thin Places” - newsletter of the Westminster Presbyterian Church

Though it may seem as though faith is absent more often than it is present, it is possible to strengthen this quality through silence and meditation. Like the sun and the stars, faith is a natural part of our soul life—we have only to learn to put our trust in this intuitive sense to begin to feel its healing effects. Faith is the fountain of spiritual discipline...an inner sense that allows us to bear with patience our doubts and despair, as well as the dry, depressing passages of life, knowing that somehow, some way, we are being led forward in the right direction.

~ from *SOUL SISTERS* by Pythia Peay

Faith is only found when needed,
only real when used.
Until then it is a seed
waiting to burst forth into
living hope.

~ Judith A. Hartley

Faith is not about how we feel; it’s about how we live.

~ Anne Lamott

One becomes an active participant in the world when he or she believes in something. Faith, optimism, and hope—we have to have those things as human beings; otherwise, life is unbearable because there is nothing that we can see beyond ourselves.

~ Gabriel Byrne

For many years in your spiritual life you will have to decide whether to seek Truth or security, for in the early stages of the soul’s development, these two things are mutually exclusive. In the soul’s fulfillment these two become as one.

~ from *THE LOST SECRETS OF PRAYER* by Guy Finley

I have over the years dismissed simple faith, viewing it as either ignorant or stagnant. Only lately have I begun to recognize a profound quality of simple faith and the dynamism and struggle involved. It is easy to complicate one’s faith. The real challenge is to maintain faith in all its simplicity! Simple faith clearly is a leap across the chasm of unanswered questions. That is the beauty of it.

~ from “The Gift of Simple Faith” by Richard B. Patterson in *Spiritual Life*, Spring '98

...Consider this then: That there is a level of truth, vitally important to human beings, which lies beyond the explainable, demonstrable natural world. In fact, this truth is often more important and sustaining to human beings because it is an eternal truth, not changeable, never at the mercy of different historical theories, or the whims of the scientist, or the observer of heavenly bodies. This truth, in a sense, is our spiritual food.

~ from *THE MESSIAH STONES* by Irving Benig

Take the first step in faith, you don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

