

Friends of Silence

Vol. XXX, No. 2

+ + + + +

February, 2017

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

Dear Friends ~ In this troubled and troubling world we are continually forced to choose sides or else risk indifference or complicity by virtue of inaction. But taking sides also perpetuates a society of winners and losers, of “us vs. them.” How can one seek peace and inclusivity and at the same time work for justice when working for justice means choosing sides and standing in opposition? How can one love one’s enemies and fight against their actions without fighting against them? We need a world characterized by tolerance and respect toward all whether they are our faith or not, whether they are our gender or not, whether they are our color or heritage or ethnicity or not, whether they are our nationality or background or not, and also whether they are in our political camp or not. We need to be a people that will not be governed by hate ~ either from within ourselves or from without. To accomplish that we will need to learn how to fuse love and compassion with nonviolent action.



For compassion to move from feeling to action it must practice the art of power. Spiritual action requires an alliance of love, power, and justice. As Paul Tillich said: in both interpersonal and political relationships love, power, and justice are inseparable. Without love, power becomes tyrannical and justice is only a name for the rule of strong. Without power, love is reduced to sentimentality and justice to an impotent ideal. Without justice, love is a perverse dance of domination and submission.

~ Pam Keen in “Spirituality and Health” Summer 2002



Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all—children, young men and women, the elders, provided they have a living faith in the Source of Love and have therefore equal love for all humankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life it must pervade the whole being and not be simply applied to isolated acts.

~ Mohandas Gandhi

FDR left a handwritten speech in a drawer when he died (to deliver at the UN). He wrote, “If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships—the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace... The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.”

~ in PROPHEET by Douglas Gillies

We must love them both—those whose opinions we share, those whose opinions we don’t share. They’ve both labored in the search for truth and have helped us in finding it.

~ Thomas Aquinas

The Hebrew word for compassion comes from the same root as the word womb, suggesting that compassion makes us womb-like, nurturing of life. With compassion we enable all things to grow into their most beautiful and complete form.

~ Estelle Frankel in “Parabola” Spring, 2003

Shall I inform you of a better act than fasting, alms, and prayers? Making peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly blossoms by the roots.

~ Muhammad



What if we asked ourselves every night:
“How does what I did today nurture life?”

~ Carol Christ

Compassion is a kind of fire—it disturbs, it surprises, it ignites, it burns, it sears, and it warms. Compassion incinerates denial; it especially warms and melts cold hearts, cold structures, frozen minds, and self-satisfied lifestyles. Those touched by compassion have their lives turned upside down.

~ Matthew Fox

This tenderness for life, bodhichitta, awakens when we no longer shield ourselves from the vulnerability of our condition, from the basic fragility of existence. It awakens through kinship with the suffering of others. We train in the bodhichitta practices in order to become so open that we can take the pain of the world in, let it touch our hearts, and turn it into compassion.

~ from THE HEALING POWER OF BODHICHITTA by Pema Chodron

Compassion is not an invitation to non-action or complacency...nor a license to sit idly, viewing the events of life from a perspective of non-involvement, numbness or denial. Becoming compassion is your invitation to immerse yourself fully into the experience of life, whatever the offering, from a place of non-judgment. Serving simultaneously as the path you may become, as well as the gift you offer to others, compassion is only possible in the healing of polarity: ie., transcending your personal polarity while remaining in this world of polarity.

~ from WALKING BETWEEN THE WORLDS by Gregg Braden

Love is not for our own sakes. Love frees us to see others as God sees them.

~ Joan Chittister

I have decided to stick with love.
Hate is too great a burden to bear.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Love is the most potent source of power we have available.

~ Margaret Wheatley

You must not hate those who do wrong or harmful things; but with compassion, you must do what you can to stop them — for they are harming themselves, as well as those who suffer from their actions.

~ His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Renouncing self and crying out to evil
To end its wars, I seek a land that lies
All unprotected like a sleeping child;
Nor is my journey reckless and unwise.
Who doubts that love has an effective weapon
May meet with a surprise.

~ Jessica Powers

In his award-winning book, *Exclusion & Embrace*, Bosnian-born theologian Miroslav Volf says, “It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference”... Where articles of belief threaten to set people in opposition to one another, we may embody articles of peace. Where difference is demonized, we may host suppers with surprising guest lists... We may test the premise that God uses the weak to confound the strong as well as the promise that the God who made others different from us is revealed in them as well as us.

~ from AN ALTAR IN THE WORLD by Barbara Brown Taylor

When I fail to embrace the solitude of God’s peace, I get caught up in the world’s downward spiral of violence and turmoil...Solitude plucks us out of the world’s frenzy and centers us in nonviolence. Solitude silences the loud voices within us to allow the still, small voice of God to speak. Solitude gives God the time and space to disarm our inner wars and gives us the strength to receive God’s gift of peace, and to learn to be at peace with ourselves and those around us.

~ from LIVING PEACE
by John Dear

