

# Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ We have all probably had our sleepless nights this month as the dark clouds of suffering and war gather and storm across our bedtime fears. During one recent, restless night, my beloved of fifty years invited me to sit with her at the “4am Club.” Here is Jackie’s welcome. Perhaps you would like to join us? ~Bob

**Welcome to the 4am Club.**

**It’s well-attended.**

**People come and go freely.**

**There are no membership fees.**

**Drop-ins are always welcome.**

**Some people bring their physical pain:  
headaches, back aches, restless legs.**

**Some bring their soul pain.**

**The language of tears is spoken.**

**Emotions circulate around the room:  
fear, sadness, shame –  
all the ones that crawl under the bed  
when daylight comes.**

**Often prayers are whispered.**

**Blessings are blown across the miles  
to loved ones.**

**Healing incantations are said  
for those who suffer.**

**Peace is yearned for.**

**Thanksgivings echo through the night.**

**In the generosity of darkness and silence,  
dreams are remembered:**

**nighttime dreams, childhood dreams,  
daydreams awaken forgotten pathways.**

**From time to time, joy pops in for a visit.  
So do the cats. Lured by magic,  
they find their way to a warm lap  
and doze off.**

**Visions of beauty show up,  
And creative weavers  
wander around, aimlessly.  
Sometimes a mysterious focus grabs hold.**

**Then, a light appears in the darkness,  
revealing the unfathomable love  
that holds everything together.**

*~ Jackie Sabath*



O Lord, remember not only men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they inflicted on us. Remember the fruits we have borne thanks to this suffering: our comradeship, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of this; and when they come to judgment let all the fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.

*~ Written on a piece of wrapping paper found near the body of a dead child in Ravensbruck where 92,000 women and children died in the Holocaust*

***The problem of the world is that we have forgotten  
that we belong to each other.***

*~ Mother Theresa*

***We are one, after all, you and I,  
together we suffer,  
together exist and  
forever will recreate each other.***

*~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

There is a piece of suffering which is a river that flows through the human condition and is part and parcel of our arising itself. Eckhart Tolle talks about it as the “collective pain body of humanity.” Conscious awakening does not put a final end to suffering, but rather, allows us to bear it in a way that is luminous, generous, and ultimately sacramental. Through our prayers and our presence, we take our part in bearing the cost of this precious divine finitude, in which and through which infinite love is revealed.

What we do know is that great injustice, cruelty, physical pain, or betrayal, when consciously accepted and generously borne, can give rise to a peculiarly luminous and healing quality of love, and that this love radiates out from the site of the pain as a source of healing and hope for the entire cosmos.



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Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:  
That even as we grieved, we grew.  
That even as we hurt, we hoped.  
That even as we tired, we tried.

~ *Amanda Gorman from "The Hill We Climb"*

**Wisdom comes alone through suffering.**  
~ *Aeschylus*

**In short: who can take away suffering without entering it?**  
~ *Henri J. M. Nouwen in THE WOUNDED HEALER*

**Is there suffering upon this new earth?  
On our earth we can only love with suffering and through suffering.  
We cannot love otherwise, and we know of no other sort of love.**  
~ *Fyodor Dostoevsky in THE DREAM OF A RIDICULOUS MAN*

If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death, human life cannot be complete.  
~ *Viktor E. Frankl*

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of those depths.  
~ *Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*

I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness; I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more.  
~ *Anne Frank*

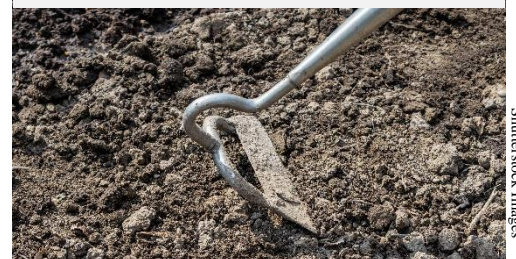


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*"Peacemakers who sow in peace  
raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:18)*

We lay down our seeds in the dark.  
Spring has been exceptionally cold  
this year. Reluctant daffodils  
have done little to convince me.  
But we do the work of the faithful  
farmer, rising in the pre-dawn hours.  
It is a chosen hiddenness, a subtle  
stretching over time, ear bent to listen  
to the ground, ready for instruction.  
Slow rhythmic movements are best.  
Sometimes we simply show up,  
holding borrowed pain, applying tears  
or not. With a gentle  
but demanding attention  
to detail, we prepare the soil.  
We plant. We wait.

~ *Nancy Thomas from "Secret Sowers" in  
CLOSE TO THE GROUND*



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Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle, the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.  
~ *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

**But in the end, it's only a passing thing.  
This shadow, even darkness, must pass.**  
~ *J.R.R. Tolkien*

Vulnerability is not a weakness, a passing indisposition, or something we can arrange to do without, vulnerability is not a choice, vulnerability is the underlying, ever present and abiding undercurrent of our natural state. To run from vulnerability is to run from the essence of our nature, the attempt to be invulnerable is the vain attempt to become something we are not and most especially, to close off our understanding of the grief of others.  
~ *David Whyte in CONSOLATIONS*

An experience of collective pain does not deliver us from grief or sadness; it is a ministry of presence. These moments remind us that we are not alone in our darkness and that our broken heart is connected to every heart that has known pain since the beginning of time.  
~ *Brené Brown in BRAVING THE WILDERNESS*

There are at least two ways to understand what it means to have our hearts broken. One is to imagine the heart broken into shards and scattered about. The other is to imagine the heart broken open into new capacity. As I stand in the tragic gap between reality and possibility, this small, tight fist of a thing called my heart can break open into greater capacity to hold more of my own and the world's suffering and joy, despair and hope.  
~ *Parker Palmer in A HIDDEN WHOLENESS*