

# Friends of Silence

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2

February 2025

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

Dear Friends ~ This afternoon while slicing onions and tossing them into a pan, the realization washed over me that in four decades I’ve eaten more than (at this point I pulled up the phone calculator, allowing the onions a few slow minutes to soften in the oil) 14,000 evening meals. While I do my fair share of cooking these days, it’s safe to say that I’ve personally prepared only a small fraction of those many, many dinners. If I haven’t cooked all that food that sustained and satiated me, I wondered, who *has*?



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At times the world feels like a pot boiling at too high a temperature and sputtering angrily over the edges. We stew in stories of fear, division, and the end of things. And yet, this is the exact same world where each of us has sat down to countless suppers laid before us by other hands: from loved ones and strangers alike. Many nights of our lives we have received nourishment from another person who has not asked for evidence that we deserved it or demanded that we align with them in every ideological way before we partake. The poet Joy Harjo points out the grounding nature of shared food when she writes, “*The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live. / The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.*”

If all things begin at a table, it’s not too far of a stretch to imagine that healing and forgiveness can happen there, too. It’s not just a place where banter and small talk counteract the disconnectedness of modern life. It’s also a place where we can experience the miracle of seeing the “other” as a guest. I wish you many warm and generous gatherings, my friends. ~ Joy



**We know [God] in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore.**

~ Dorothy Day in *THE LONG LONELINESS*

...we need to find ways of sharing our intimate experiences of the Mystery, for we are one. It is through one another that we will know more of the Life that flows within us all. It is through sharing our fragments of insight that we will come to a fuller picture of the One who is at the heart of each life.

~ John Philip Newell

**Stay with me,  
Remain here with me  
Watch and pray,  
Watch and pray**

~ Lyrics from the Taizé chant, “Stay with Me”

**The answer was overwhelmingly consistent: beauty appears when something is completely and absolutely and openly itself.**

~ Deena Metzger in *WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE*

**Life shrinks or expands according to one’s courage.**

~ Anais Nin in *THE DIARY OF ANAIS NIN*

**It is unusual a mailbox chokes you up, and because there are too many probable causes—not for the mailbox: for my being choked up—let me simply tell you it was the phrase affixed in those janky silver sticker letters, usually used for a name or address, a little crooked, the V and W peeling slightly, the phrase itself leaning back, lounging, or maybe almost indiscernibly ascending:**

**TRAVELERS WELCOME**

~ Ross Gay in *THE BOOK OF (MORE) DELIGHTS*

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The older I get, the more convinced I am that the space between people who are trying their best to understand each other is hallowed ground.

~ Fred Rogers

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.

~ St. Thomas Aquinas

**In surrender I clear a space in which something new can grow.**

**I place my faith in something larger than me. I trust.**

~ Katrina Kenison in *MITTEN STRINGS FOR GOD*



Someone who is filled with ideas, concepts, opinions and convictions cannot be a good host. There is no inner space to listen, no openness to discover the gift of the other. It is not difficult to see how those “who know it all” can kill a conversation and prevent an interchange of ideas. The more mature we become the more we will be able to give up our inclination to grasp, catch, and comprehend the fullness of life and the more we will be ready to let life enter into us.

~ Henri Nouwen in *REACHING OUT*

Forgiveness means accepting the core of every human being as the same as yourself and giving them the gift of not judging them... Forgiveness starts with ourselves and extends to others. Accepting that the core of your own being is as precious and wonderful as that of any other person is the greatest gift you can ever give yourself.

~ Joan Borysenko in *MINDING THE BODY, MENDING THE MIND*



**...At this table  
we sing with joy,  
with sorrow.  
We pray of  
suffering and remorse.  
We give thanks.**

**Perhaps the world will end  
at the kitchen table,  
while we are laughing  
and crying,  
eating of  
the last sweet bite.**

~ Joy Harjo from  
“Perhaps the World Ends Here”  
in *THE WOMAN WHO  
FELL FROM THE SKY*

Where there is separation,  
there is pain.

And where there is pain,  
there is story.

And where there is story,  
there is understanding,  
and misunderstanding,  
listening  
and not listening.

May we — separated peoples, estranged strangers,  
unfriended families, divided communities —  
turn toward each other,  
and turn toward our stories,  
with understanding  
and listening,  
with argument and acceptance,  
with challenge, change  
and consolation.

Because if God is to be found,  
God will be found  
in the space  
between.

~ Padraig O'Tuama, “A prayer for reconciliation,”  
in *DAILY PRAYER WITH THE CORRYMEELA COMMUNITY*