

Friends of Silence

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"Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?"

"Hope Is the Hardest Love We Carry":

Reflections on light, darkness, and the courage to stay

Dear Friends ~ Hope is not the denial of sorrow, nor the promise of a better ending. It is what allows us to keep company with life as it is—walking sometimes in light, sometimes in shadow—without turning away. The voices gathered here speak of hope as something quieter and deeper than optimism: a strength that rises in winter, a candle that survives the storm, a willingness to remain human even when the way forward is unclear. These poems, prayers, and reflections invite us to stay, to breathe, to trust that something essential is alive within us and among us, even now. ~ Bob



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Grandfather says this: in life there is sadness as well as joy, losing as well as winning, falling as well as standing. I do not say this to make you despair, but to teach you that life is a journey sometimes walked in light and sometimes walked in shadow.

~ Joseph Marshall III in *KEEP GOING*

Clearly hopelessness has at least as much to do with what we bring to life as it does with what life brings to us... The challenge of hopelessness is the challenge to re-enter the human race, to take our part in it knowing that it is as much our responsibility to shape life as it is for life to shape us...Hopelessness calls us beyond quitting what we cannot quit, to learn how to do what we have been born to do. Even if this means doing one thing while waiting to do another.

~ Joan Chittister in *SCARRED BY TROUBLE, TRANSFORMED BY HOPE*

The World breaks everyone, then some become strong at the broken places.

~ Ernest Hemingway in *A FAREWELL TO ARMS*

Hope's home is at the innermost point in us, and in all things. It is a quality of aliveness. It does not come at the end, as the feeling that results from a happy outcome. Rather, it lies at the beginning, as a pulse of truth that sends us forth. When our innermost being is attuned to this pulse it will send us forth in hope, regardless of the physical circumstances of our lives. Hope fills us with the strength to stay present, to abide in the flow of the Mercy no matter what outer storms assail us. It is entered always and only through surrender; that is, through the willingness to let go of everything we are presently clinging to. And yet when we enter it, it enters us and fills us with its own life — a quiet strength beyond anything we have ever known.

~ Cynthia Bourgeault in *MYSTICAL HOPE: TRUSTING IN THE MERCY OF GOD*

*All winter
the blue heron
slept among the horses.
I do not know
the custom of herons,
do not know
if the solitary habit
is their way,
or if he listened for
some missing one—
not knowing even
that was what he did—
in the blowing
sounds in the dark.
I know that
hope is the hardest
love we carry.
He slept
with his long neck
folded, like a letter
put away.*

~ Jane Hirshfield, "Hope and Love,"
in *THE LIVES OF THE HEART*

*Go slowly
Consent to it
But don't wallow in it
Know it as a place of germination
And growth
Remember the light
Take an outstretched hand if you find one
Exercise unused senses
Find the path by walking it
Practice trust
Watch for dawn.*

~ Marilyn Chandler McEntyre,
"What to do in the Darkness," in *MIDWINTER LIGHT*

What do you want to be? People always ask. They don't ask who or how you want to be?

I might have said, amazed forever. I wanted to be curious, interested, interesting, hopeful – and a little bit odd was okay too. I did not know if I wanted to run a bakery, be a postal worker, play a violin or the timpani drum in an orchestra. That part was unknown.

~ Naomi Shihab Nye in *A MAZE ME: POEMS FOR GIRLS*

To get up each morning with the resolve to be happy ... is to condition circumstance instead of being conditioned by them.

~ Ralph Waldo Trine in *WHAT ALL THE WORLD'S A-SEEKING*



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*Human beings suffer
They torture one another,
They get hurt and get hard.
The innocent in gaols
Beat on their bars together.
History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.
So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.*

~ Seamus Heaney, "The Cure at Troy"

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

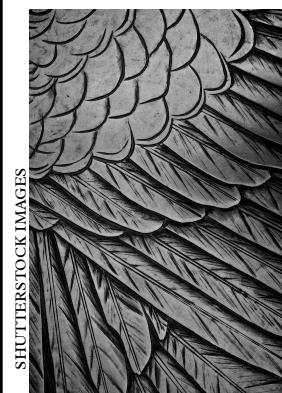
~ "The Lord's Prayer," in *A NEW ZEALAND PRAYER BOOK / HE KARAKIA MIHINARE O AOTEAROA*

There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle... In moments of discouragement, defeat or even despair, there are always certain things to cling to. Little things usually: remembered laughter, the face of a sleeping child, a tree in the wind – in fact, any reminder of something deeply felt or dearly loved. None is so poor as not to have many of these small candles. When they are lighted, darkness goes away and a touch of wonder remains.

~ Arthur Gordon in *A TOUCH OF WONDER*

Anyone who has probed the inner life, who has sat in silence long enough to experience the stillness of the mind behind its apparent noise is faced with a mystery. Apart from all the outer attractions of life in the world, there exists at the center of human consciousness something quite satisfying and beautiful in itself, a beauty without features. The mystery is not so much that these two dimensions exist – an outer world and the mystery of the inner world – but that we are suspended between them, as a space in which both worlds meet ... as if the human a is the meeting point, the threshold between two worlds.

~ Kabir Edmund Helminski in *THE KNOWING HEART*



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*Hope is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –
And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –
And sore must be the storm –
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm ...*

~ Emily Dickinson from "Hope is the Thing With Feathers,"
in *THE COMPLETE POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON*

*The illusion that God is absent is the fundamental illusion
of the human condition.*

~ Thomas Keating

Days pass and the years vanish and we walk sightless among miracles. O Holy One, fill our eyes with seeing and our minds with knowing. Let there be moments when your presence, like lightning, illuminates the darkness in which we walk... And we will exclaim in wonder, "How filled with awe is this place and we did not know it."

~ Rachel Naomi Remen in *MY GRANDFATHER'S BLESSINGS*