

Friends of Silence

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



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Dear Friends ~ Having just celebrated a holiday meant to remind us to give thanks, it seems appropriate to contemplate cultivating a practice of gratefulness that would not just fall on one day of the calendar. It would permeate the whole of our lives. To be grateful for blessings does not need to mean that one is turning a blind eye to all that is running amok in the world. Rather it is to latch on hopefully to the ever-present reality that, in the midst of chaos and disaster, we still receive abundant gifts of life and breath and beauty and grace. That is not to say that we should mistake privilege for blessing or an attitude of entitlement for one of appreciation or what has been taken for what has been given. It is, however, to pay attention to the blessings falling gently all around us like a soft and silent snowfall and to respond with grateful hearts.



To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all our lives—the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections—that requires hard spiritual work. Still, we are only truly grateful people when we can say thank you to all that has brought us to the present moment. ~ Henri Nouwen

True thanking is to enjoy God. Gratitude is a true understanding of who we really are. With reverence and awe we turn ourselves around toward the work God leads us to do, enjoying and thanking with our real selves. ~ Julian of Norwich

The unthankful heart discovers no mercies; the thankful heart will find in every hour some heavenly blessing. ~ Henry Ward Beecher

Gifting is a simple way of expressing gratitude for opportunities to share. In essence, it is an act of balance. If you take something, you give something in return. What you give can be in the form of an actual gift or simply your time. It is a means of honoring that which you are working to understand. Gifting is a means of awakening a greater sense of gratitude in life and for life. ~ from ANIMAL-SPEAK by Tom Andrew

The practice of gratitude is a wonderful means of cultivating positive emotion. By beginning to practice feeling gratitude for what you currently have in your life, you free up a tremendous amount of energy that is normally dissipated in worry, anxiety, and fear. A positive feeling state, with an inspired heart and a clear mind, is the perfect starting place for moving toward creating a higher level of well-being in your life. ~ James Strohecker in PEAK VITALITY



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The very act of giving thanks
Draws the best out of you,
Helps to keep your heart and mind open;
Helps to keep your awareness expanding.
The more blessings you count,
The more they increase.

~ Adapted from a poem by Eileen Caddy



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Be attentive lest you miss the grace that passes before you, whether as small as a single birdsong or as broad as the rising sun of your own life restored. Be grateful, lest these pearls have been thrown to swine. And be ready to speak of it in the grandest or simplest words or deeds. You have not invented your own hope; it has sprung, green and living, from the grace that has rained upon you, has welled up from deepest springs, has come to you in steadfast rivers. ~ Steve Garnaas-Holmes at www.unfoldinglight.net

The flower of gratitude is like the nectar of the hive.

~ Anita Diamani

The Gift

Be still, my soul, and steadfast.
 Earth and heaven both are still watching
 though time is draining from the clock
 and your walk, that was confident and quick,
 has become slow.

So be slow if you must, but let
 the heart still play its true part.
 Love still as once you loved deeply
 and without patience. Let God and the world
 know you are grateful.
 That the gift has been given.

~ Mary Oliver

In daily life we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy...Love wholeheartedly, be surprised, give thanks and praise—then you will discover the fullness of your life.

~ Br. David Steindl-Rast

There is a calmness to a life lived in gratitude, a quiet joy.

~ Ralph H. Blum

Gratitude softens us.

~ Nan Merrill

To pray is to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the Divine margin in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living. It is all we can offer in return for the mystery by which we live... It is so embarrassing to live. How strange we are in the world and how presumptuous our doings. Only one response can maintain us: Gratefulness for witnessing the wonder; for the gift of our unearned right to live, to adore, to fulfill. It is gratefulness which makes the soul great.

~ from *I ASKED FOR WONDER* by Abraham Heschel

Joy blossoms in gratitude for what we have been given...beginning with the gift of life.

~ Bonnie Thurston

We are all wanderers in the earth, but only a few of us in each generation have discovered the life of charity, the living from day to day, receiving gifts gratefully through grace, and rendering them, multiplied through grace, to the Giver..the grateful rendering, the gratitude and giving.

~ from *MOGADOR'S BOOK* by Robert Lox

Joy is really the simplest form of gratitude.

~ Karl Barth

People often ask me how Buddhists answer the question: 'Does God exist?' The other day I was walking along the river...I was suddenly aware of the sun, shining through the bare trees. Its warmth, its brightness, and all this completely free, completely gratuitous. Simply there for us to enjoy. And without my knowing it, completely spontaneously, my two hands came together, and I realized that I was making *gassho*. And it occurred to me that this is all that matters: that we can bow, take a deep bow. Just that. Just that.

~ Rev. Eido Tai Shimano



Kawase Hasui (Japan, 1883-1957), Courtesy F/S Gallery Archives