

Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~

Spending five weeks in India has made me acutely aware of how much I take for granted and even expect from life. Being

able to drink clean water, a shelter with heat in winter, breathable air, space to walk, trash out of sight, food in my belly... When I was little my mother used to repeat a line I suspect she may have heard from her own mother, “I cried because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.”

At five or six years old I didn't get it. Seeing up close abject poverty, unbearable squalor, and folks dragging useless legs on filthy ground with flip flops on their hands—it begins to sink in. I did nothing to deserve being born into this life of mine any more than the forlorn toddler hanging at her imploring mother's side did to be born into a slum beside the railroad tracks. Here's another saying:

“There but for the grace of God, go I.” Yet why should I have been extended the grace of God and not them? These privileges we have been given are not our “rights”—expectations based on pride at how well we have done or self-righteousness at how good we have been. I am reminded of the parable of the talents—to whom much has been given...

What are we called to if not humility and gratitude—and compassion?



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The word humility, like the human, comes from *humus*, or earth. We are most human when we do no great things. We are not so important; we are simple dust and spirit—at best, loving midwives, participants in a process much larger than we. If we are quiet and listen and feel how things move, perhaps we will be wise enough to put our hands on what waits to be born, and bless it with kindness and care.

~ from *SABBATH* by Wayne Muller

Be humble in your perpetual uncertainty.

~ Paul Pearsall

Cultivating gratitude opens us to allurements, strengthens our trust, and expands our compassion. Gratitude manifests in the midst of our everyday living when we pause to take account of how much we have been given. We are present to the wonder of the simplest gifts: a glass of water, a spoonful of food, a breath of air. At such times our hearts are full.

~ Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow in “*EarthLight*,”
Summer, 2001



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The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.

~ from *THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON* by Henri J. M. Nouwen

The way of hubris . . . pretends that we can be well by dispersing, by breaking down life's oneness into entirely unrelated compartments. And it pretends that we can be well by depriving, by denying to others and to other species what we ourselves most cherish. "By way of contrast," says Hildegard [of Bingen], "humility does not rob people or take anything from them. Rather, it holds together everything in love." The way of humility . . . remembers the sacred Ground of being within us all. And it knows that we will be truly well to the extent that we love one another.

~ from *A NEW HARMONY* by John Philip Newell

Cooperation and humbleness always go together. Humbleness is seeing that everyone's path through earth school is as difficult as yours, and as important. It is not pretending that you are meek, or inferior. It is making the music together that cannot be made alone, and that cannot be made without the music that only you, alone, can make.

~ from *SOUL STORIES* by Gary Zukav

We need a coat with two pockets. In one pocket there is dust, and in the other pocket there is gold. We need a coat with two pockets to remind us who we are.

~ a Hasidic tale

If we will only learn silence, we will learn two things: to pray and to be humble. You cannot love unless you have humility, and you cannot be humble if you do not love. From the silence of the heart God speaks.

~ Mother Teresa

A humble attitude requires an agile spirit, one that "shakes the dust off" and moves on. The modern world equates humility with submission, which breeds nothing but guilt or self-loathing, that leaves one preoccupied with "worthlessness" and stuck in a narcissistic loop. True humility liberates and produces self-love and love of others, not guilt or resentment... And authentic humility generates power by taking radical responsibility for ourselves, even responsibility (though not blame) for things beyond our control. Humility is a discipline in search of the true spiritual goal—to love.

~ Rose Marie Berger

In the beginning, there was Love, and Love created and thus became Creator. I give all honor and glory and my humblest gratitude to the Creator for giving me the gift of life in Love held so delicately in each and every breath, and for guiding me to an experience where I could learn the power, magic, and

understanding of just how incredible this gift really is. For the rest of my life, I will do everything within my power to honor, cherish, and protect this gift of life that connects us all.

~ from *THE LEGACY OF LUNA* by Julia B. Hill

Humbleness: the awareness of our dependence on Spirit and the awareness of our need for and interdependence with other human beings and the world around us on all levels.

~ Edmund Helminski

I believe that any human activity which stems from basic gentleness and the nonviolent nature of human beings has the guarantee to be of benefit and service.

~ the Dalai Lama

Look well, O soul, upon thyself, lest spiritual ambition should mislead and blind thee to thy essential task: to wait in quietness, to knock and persevere in humble faith.

~ from *THE FACE OF GOD* by Gilbert Shaw



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