

Friends of Silence

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



Stained glass by Robin White © 2018

Dear Friends ~ The world aches with a heart-wrenching longing for hope, for healing, for belonging, for a life-sustaining future. The most pressing moral and spiritual question of the age is—what is our relationship to the earth and how do we set it right again. What is it that needs to be done? If what we have learned from culture and its economic and political systems is a hierarchical worldview that elevates the human species above all others, that markets the insatiable use of natural resources for the sake of a more convenient, easy, comfortable lifestyle (for the privileged few anyway), that values growth and profit above all else; then we shall have to unlearn the arrogance of human preeminence, call for the cherishing of earthly gifts to be shared by all, and choose to value life—all life—over short-sighted “progress”. What will it take to turn the tide of human folly? We shall have to move through lament into action, to let go of egoism and embrace imagination, to surrender attachments and unleash collaborative, interdependent energy.



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In the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer:

“Weep! Weep!” calls a toad from the water’s edge. And I do. If grief can be a doorway to love, then let us all weep for the world we are breaking apart so we can love it back to wholeness again.



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Even as seas rise against shores, another great tide is beginning to rise—a tide of outrage against the pillage of the planet, a tide of commitment to justice and human rights, a swelling affirmation of moral responsibility to the future and to Earth’s fullness of life.

~ from *GREAT TIDE RISING: TOWARDS CLARITY AND MORAL COURAGE IN A TIME OF PLANETARY CHANGE* by Kathleen Moore

This is what Nature wants to restore in us: that breathless harmony in which her voice becomes ours and our voice hers, and it seems blessed just to walk in her shadow. . . her light shining-out from our eyes. ~ from *HAIKU POND* by Vincent Tripi

The word *blessing* evokes a sense of warmth and protection; it suggests that no life is alone or unreachable. Each life is clothed in raiment of spirit that secretly links it to everything else.

~ from *TO BLESS THE SPACE BETWEEN US* by John O’Donohue

The heart can’t wait to speak of this ecstasy
The soul is kissing the earth, saying
Oh God, what a blessing!

~Rumi



Wall hanging made at the Noh-Institute of Tibetan Arts

He who grabs much, grasps little.

~ Mexican proverb from *EARTHCARE: WORLD FOLKTALES TO TALK ABOUT*
by Margaret Read MacDonald

were all part of the same fabric, which was the fabric of which the universe is made, and that this fabric *lived*. As pointed contrast, the cement sidewalk lay ugly and dead, a scar in the picture; except for it, the whole scene was transcendent with beauty, the colors had an intensity, a purity not present in “real” life, and the vision was imbued with a feeling of the perfect peace and oneness and benevolence of the universe.

~ from *THE PERFECTION OF THE MORNING* by Sharon Butala

To call these things sacred is to say that they have a value beyond their usefulness for human ends, that they themselves become the standard by which our acts, our economics, our laws, and our purposes must be judged. No one has the right to appropriate them or profit from them at the expense of others. Any government that fails to protect them forfeits its legitimacy. All people, all living things, are part of the earth life, and so are sacred. No one of us stands higher or lower than any other. Only justice can assure balance: only ecological balance can sustain freedom. Only in freedom can that fifth sacred thing we call spirit flourish in its full diversity.

~ from *THE FIFTH SACRED THING* by Starhawk

Through greater intimacy with the natural world, we begin to appreciate its complexity and gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between the rains, the soul, and the plants, the animals and the trees, and how the welfare of one living being depends on that of another.

~ from *SACRED WATER* by Nathaniel Altman

My father always told me that plants and flowers have souls. How else could wise King Solomon have spoken to them? He wouldn't have had much conversation with them if they hadn't had souls! We have to respect all growing things even if we do not understand their ways.

~ from *THE ILLUMINATED SOUL* by Aryeh Lev Stollman

Culture has a way of giving us ladders when we need trees, reason when we need myth, and separateness when we need unity. In the music of the universe, there is harmony. The discord, the non-harmonious, is slowly drifting back in to the misty domains of our lost games. Ritual is being restored to rite. With a higher sense of the rhythms of the planet, we can

recognize the emerging vision of grace. A grace to honor, not below, our Mother. A grace to honor each other as end products of diverse cultural journeys. A grace to become the kind of human that can embody the spiritual. A grace to blend into all that is, was, and shall be.

~ from *MIND OF OUR MOTHER* by Bob Samples

We are all bound by a covenant of reciprocity: plant breath for animal breath, winter and summer, predator and prey, grass and fire, night and day, living and dying. Water knows this, clouds know this. Soil and rocks know they are dancing in a continuous

giveaway of making, unmaking, and making again the earth.

Our elders say that ceremony is the way we can remember to remember. In the dance of the giveaway, remember that the earth is a gift that we must pass on, just as it came to us. When we forget, the dances we'll need will be for mourning. For the passing of polar bears, the silence of cranes, for the death of rivers and the memory of snow.

~ from *BRAIDING SWEETGRASS* by Robin Wall Kimmerer



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FOR THE CHILDREN

The rising hills, the slopes,
of statistics
lie before us.
the steep climb
of everything going up,
up, as we all
go down.

In the next century
or the one beyond that,
they say,
are valleys, pastures,
we can meet there in peace
if we make it.

To climb these coming crests
one word to you, to
you and your children:

stay together
learn the flowers
go light

~ by Gary Snyder in
TURTLE ISLAND



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