

Friends of Silence

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June 2020

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

Dear Friends~ We started our seeds inside, lining the south-facing windowsills, the same week that a pandemic made itself known to the collective body of the world. Tomatoes, kale, peas, carrots, lettuce, sorrel, beets...each seed tucked into the soil like a sort of prayer for health and a future. In early January, when I made my ritual list of intentions for the new year, I mystified myself writing simply, "*tend* food". Not "plant" or "grow" or "preserve", as much as *tend*. My sister-in-law once told me that the actual planting of a garden is the "glamorous" part because it's noticeable and satisfying in the immediate. But growing food also requires long months of patient attention: weeding, watering, waiting, hoping, pruning, tying, waiting, hoping...tending.

In a few weeks' time sprouts emerged and we prepared the garden beds in anticipation. Nearly every day that I spent with a trowel and my hands turning the soil, I would unearth another empty snail shell. These talismans appeared so often that I began to collect them on my dresser, then gifted them to my kids and eventually I just turned them back into the ground. I studied the spirals, rubbed my thumb over the smooth contours and contemplated them as symbols calling us (especially in this uncertain era of social distance) to slow down and journey inward as a means of *tending the soul*; to "spiral in" during a fraught time when it would be all too possible to unravel. ~ Joy



...Let us listen to the sound of breath in our bodies.

Let us listen to the sounds of our own voices, of our own names, of our own fears. Let us name the harsh light and soft darkness that surround us... The world is big, and wide, and wild and wonderful and wicked, and our lives are murky, magnificent, malleable and full of meaning. Oremus.

Let us pray.

~ Pádraig Ó Tuama, from "Oremus," in
DAILY PRAYER WITH THE CORRYMEELA COMMUNITY

Cultivate personal rituals of solitude. Learn to be with it all. Become immense inside.

Set your prayers on fire.

~ Mary Ellen Lough

Being alone — physically alone atop a mountain — reminds me of how seldom one is alone in the sort of urbanized life we live nowadays. As I sat, there was a certain peace which I was able to capture for a moment. This physical aloneness is by no means the same as loneliness — not even close kin to it; for I was not alone. On occasions when I am able to get to a mountain top, the realization of the nature of the "mountain-top experience" returns anew.

~ Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, from *BALM IN GILEAD*



I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.

~ John Muir, from *JOHN OF THE MOUNTAINS*

You might as well answer the door, my child, the truth is furiously knocking.

~ Lucille Clifton, from *GOOD WOMAN*



O my Beloved, you are my shepherd,
I shall not want;
You bring me to green pastures for rest
and lead me beside still waters
renewing my spirit,
You restore my soul.
You lead me in the path of goodness
to follow Love's way...

You prepare a table for me
in the presence of all my fears...

and I shall dwell in the heart
of the Beloved
forever.

~ Nan Merrill, excerpt from Psalm 23
in PSALMS FOR PRAYING

Be patient where you sit in
the dark...
Dawn is coming.

~ Rumi



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Claim your silence... We--a society so obsessed with noise, news clips, action, arguments, debates, anger, confrontation, stimulation and busy-ness--must recreate ourselves and re-carve a place of silence (some might call it prayer) in our lives. It is a great healing measure for the wounded world outside of us, and the wounded world within us.

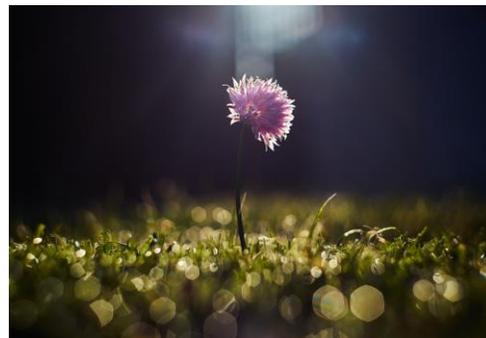
~ Lyla June Johnston

Until the culture recognizes the legitimacy of growing down, each person in the culture struggles blindly to make sense of the darkness that the soul requires to deepen into life.

~ James Hillman

If you wish to love you must learn to see again... You must tear away from your being the roots of society that have penetrated to the marrow. You must drop out. Externally everything will go on as before, you will continue to be in the world, but no longer of it... And in your heart you will now be free at last and utterly alone... There is no one there by your side, absolutely no one. At first it will seem unbearable, but that is only because you are unaccustomed to aloneness. But if you manage to stay there for a while the desert will suddenly blossom into Love.

~ Anthony De Mello, from THE WAY TO LOVE



Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear,
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for a new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye
clear. What we need is here.

~ Wendell Berry, excerpt from "The Wild Geese" in
THE SELECTED POEMS OF WENDELL BERRY