

Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends~ It is the season of autumn in the Northern Hemisphere, when the creatures slow and burrow into the Earth. The plants allow their chlorophyll to drain from their leaves and their sap to sink into the roots. Everything seems to be moving inward, releasing, and letting go. There is comfort in observing that quiet and sure return, a balm for us who are facing so much loss and death. The late autumn with its sense of cycles and transformation softens me to reacquaint myself with a dark angel, one whom I seldom have the heart to acknowledge. There is an ancient song that speaks of the intimacy of our formation in the dark cottage of our mother's womb, of the deep connection with the Holy that is our birthright. We are cradled in an immense and personal belonging, in a loving communion that wheels and wheels. I attend to my breath, the sweet tether to this astonishing world, to all whom I love, to the rich tapestry of the present moment; and which may at the last usher my return to a place I never left.

~ Lindsay



... You formed my inward being,
You knit me together in my mother's womb...
Your mysteries fill me with wonder!
More than I know myself do You know me;
my essence was not hidden from You,
When I was being formed in secret,
intricately fashioned from the elements of the earth...

~ Nan Merrill, "Psalm 139" in PSALMS FOR PRAYING



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...May you know in your soul that there is no need to be afraid... You are not going somewhere strange. You are going back to the home you never left. May you have a wonderful urgency to live your life to the full... May your going be sheltered and your welcome assured. May your soul smile in the embrace of your anam cara.

~ John O'Donohue in ANAM CARA: A BOOK OF CELTIC WISDOM

I am done with talk of death except as it is a part of life, one side of a sphere whose roundness would otherwise be incomplete. In a letter van Gogh wrote, "The earth had thought to be flat . . . science has proved that the world is round. . . . they persist nowadays in believing that life is flat and runs from birth to death. However, life, too, is probably round."

~ Fenton Johnson in THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE HEART

**Oh, abide with me, where it's breathless and it's empty
yes, abide with me and we'll pass the evening gently
stay awake with me and we'll listen more intently
to something wordless and remaining sure and every changing
in the quietness of now.**

There are things I cannot prove, and still somehow I know.

**It's like a message in a bottle that some unseen hand has
thrown**

you don't have to be afraid, you don't have to walk alone

I don't know but I suspect, that it will feel like home.

~ Carrie Newcomer & Parker Palmer, "Abide"

When death comes

like the hungry bear in autumn...

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what will it be like, that cottage of darkness?...

When it's over, I want to say: all my life

I was a bride married to amazement....

When it's over, I don't want to wonder

if I have made of my life something particular, and real....

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

~ Mary Oliver, excerpts from "When Death Comes"

in NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, VOL. 1



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It is the most supremely interesting moment in life, the only one in fact when living seems life, and I count in the greatest good fortune to have these few months so full of interest and instruction in the knowledge of my approaching death. It is as simple as one's own person as any fact of nature, the fall of a leaf or the blooming of a rose, and I have a delicious consciousness, ever present, of wide spaces close at hand, and whisperings of release in the air.

~ Alice James in *THE DIARY OF ALICE JAMES*

What I've seen on my rounds is that if you are lucky enough to have the opportunity to reflect at the end of a life, then love is revealed as the great currency. It's the thing. The treasury. It's what mattered...

How well did I love? whom did I love?, and how was love central to the life that I made for myself?

...When the lots are counted, when we are gathered in, we will find that it was love that mattered. Love expressed, given, received, fought for. So for those of us fighting right now, I say; keep going. As a culture, as an individual, believe in the full life that is your bequeathed inheritance, not the subterranean half-life that terror and impoverished minded bullies will try and spike your wine with. You are too good for that.

~ Martin Shaw in *A COUNSEL OF RESISTANCE AND DELIGHT IN THE FACE OF FEAR*

What if your dying is an angel? And what if your dying job, should you choose to accept it, is to wrestle this angel of your dying instead of fighting it? ...Wrestling isn't what happens to you. It is what you do. And you will not be alone in it...Living your way of life wrestles the way life has of being itself: That is how meaning is made...That is what the news of your death could mean: It could mean the beginning, unadorned, common, and singular, of your one true life and its work...

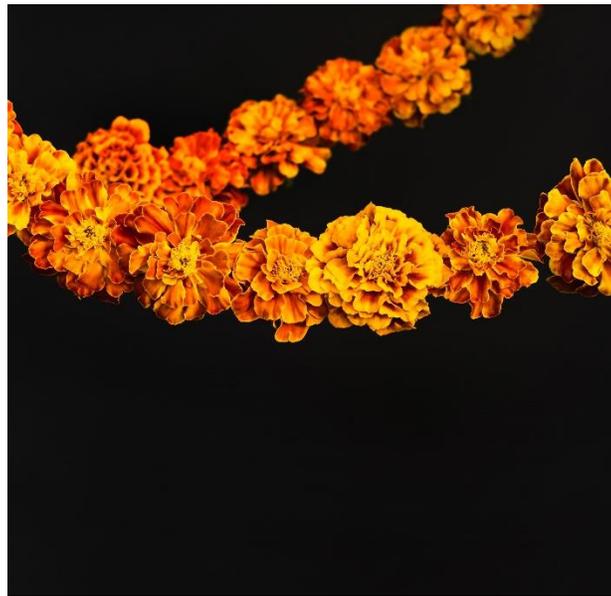
Come to your death as an angel to wrestle instead of an executioner to fight or flee from and you turn your dying into a question instead of an edict: What shall my life mean? What shall my time of dying be for? What is it going be like, that cottage of darkness?

~ Stephen Jenkinson in *DIE WISE*

...when destiny draws you
into these spaces of poverty,
and your heart stays generous
until some door opens into the light,
you are quietly befriending your death;
so that you will have no need to fear
when your time comes to turn and leave,
that the silent presence of your death
would call your life to attention...
to the urgency to become free
and equal to the call of your destiny.

~ John O'Donohue, "For Death" in

TOBLESS THE SPACE BETWEEN US



So I turn my head and look towards death now.
Feeling my way through the tunnel with the space of
emptiness and quiet.
That shimmering silence that awaits me....

A breath...A pause.
I relax, and then float on toward the opening awaiting me...

This is my direction now; inward to the green pastures,
to the great light of divine love, the great peace of All Knowing.

~ Karen Paine-Gerne, quoted in *LIFE PRAYERS*

