

# Friends of Silence

Vol. XXXIV, No. 9

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October 2021

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

Dear Friends ~ The newspaper article reporting that rates of insomnia have skyrocketed during the pandemic did not surprise me, perhaps because 3 a.m. is an hour I have inhabited lately too. So much is unsettled and unsettling, and what is known is heartbreaking. How do we navigate through such uncertainty and loss? There is no straight nor easy way, but there are tracings on the map of ancient wisdom that may be discerned if we peer closely with the eyes of soul and heart and listen for the voices of those calling us to still our noisy minds and bend down in the Silence to study here and look there. Thus, we may find guidance, encouragement, and waypoints by which to steer through the dark night.

**It has always been the calling of Friends of Silence to gather these wise, provocative, comforting, challenging, loving voices and offer them in the modest Letter that goes out freely each month to seekers and pilgrims around the world. Once a year we ask for your donation so that we can pay for printing, postage, and related expenses of the Friends of Silence Letter. We ask you now to please use the enclosed envelope to make your contribution and keep the Letter coming to you and all journey-makers navigating through these disorienting times.**

May you be ever encouraged and guided by the “*true Wisdom [that] emerges silently, rising up from the Mystery of the unseen Source within all*” (Nan Merrill from *WALKING WITH WISDOM*). ~ Lindsay



‘That’ll put the jizz back in you,’  
said old Brid, her eyes glinting,  
as she handed me a bowl of real water  
from the purest well in Gleann an Atha...

‘It’s had to find a well these days,’  
said old Brid, filling up my bowl again.  
‘They’re hiding in rushes and juking in grass,  
all choked up and clatty with scum  
but for all the neglect they get  
their mettle is still true.  
Look for your own well, pet,  
for there’s a hard time coming.  
There will have to be a going back to sources.’

~ Cathal Ó Searcaigh in *THE WELL*  
(quoted in *IF WOMEN ROSE ROOTED*  
by Sharon Blackie)

Where is the wisdom we have  
lost in knowledge?  
Knowledge gives us  
information. Wisdom gives us  
light on the way. Knowledge  
is skill. Wisdom is a quality.  
Knowledge can be learned.  
Wisdom can only be distilled  
from those places in life

where knowledge is not enough to really explain what was happening  
to us, or information failed to resolve what was happening to the other.

~ Joan Chittister in the foreword to

*WISDOM OF THE BENEDICTINE ELDERS*

In the sweet territory of silence we touch the mystery. It’s the place  
of reflection and contemplation, and it’s the place where we can  
connect with the deep knowing, to the deep wisdom way.

~ Angeles Arrien

**Resplendent and eternal is Wisdom,  
readily perceived by those who listen  
in the Silence of the heart.**

**Wisdom hastens to make Herself known;  
She is available to all who love and seek Her;  
who awakens Her from within  
will not be disappointed;  
for Wisdom awaits at the threshold.**

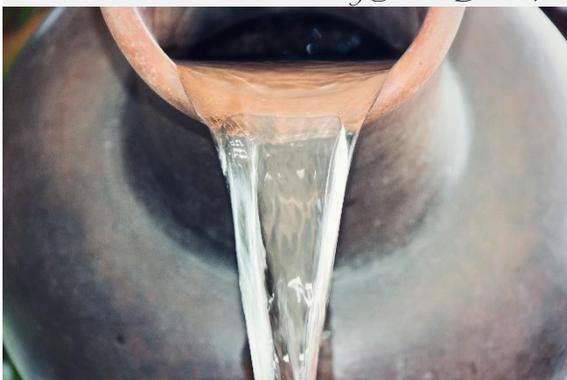
~ Nan Merrill in *WALKING WITH WISDOM*

Wisdom is the art of balancing the known with the unknown, the  
suffering with the joy; it is a way of linking the whole of life together  
in a new and deeper unity ... Wisdom is the art of living in rhythm  
with your soul, your life, and the divine.

~ John O’Donohue in *ANAM CARA*



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At a conference on the Iranian poet Hafez I attended recently, one of the older Persian speakers suddenly leaned forward to the audience and said, “Make your work The Face of the Beloved, and let what you create be her lashes, her mole, her lips.” To do that would mean carrying all these gifts, letting the radiance of the World beyond the world shine into each cottage door you come to. Doing so requires both huge strength and the capacity for a kind of visible luminosity, an active principle that can only be born from a great stillness.

~ Martin Shaw in *A BRANCH FROM THE LIGHTNING TREE*

Here is what is known: gifts upon gifts cascade down the air without ceasing through the turning days ... there is a vast conversation going on all around us, under our feet and in the surrounding air. The many species of insect and animal life are moving and breathing, eating and excreting, emerging and dying, all part of the web of life which holds us and every being, an immense compass of wordless wisdom, a thousand teachers and guides waiting for our attention.

~ Lindsay McLaughlin from “Holy Ground” on the *Friends of Silence* blog

I too was a stranger at first in this dark dripping forest  
perched at the edge of the sea, but I sought out an elder,  
my Sitka Spruce grandmother with a lap wide enough for  
my grandchildren. I introduced myself, told her my name  
and why I had come.

~ Robin Wall Kimmerer in *BRAIDING SWEETGRASS*



Jim Hall

In the immense field of divine compassion, countless small life fields are interwoven with each other. When human hearts deepen through some form of contemplation, there emerges in them an intuition of human oneness prior to all separation ... a “communion of saints”. In each religion's communal story, there is a way of handing on from generation to generation this transforming perception of universal solidarity in the Mystery. We do not learn such wisdom on our own. We receive this wisdom from someone else.

~ Carolyn Grattan in *THE ART OF SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE*

“We are knee-deep in a river, searching for water,” writes Kabir Helminski, a contemporary Wisdom teacher in the Sufi lineage, using a vivid image to capture the irony of our contemporary plight. The sacred road maps of wholeness still exist in the cosmos. There is a vision large enough to contain not only our minds but also our hearts and souls; an understanding of our place in the divine cosmology large enough to order and unify our lives and our planet. These truths are not esoteric or occult in the usual sense of the terms; they are not hidden from sight. In the Christian West they are strewn literally throughout the entire sacred tradition: in the Bible, the liturgy, the hymnody and chants, the iconography. But to read the clues, it is first necessary to bring the heart and mind and body into balance, to awaken. The One can be known—not in a flash of mystical vision but the clarity of unitive seeing.

~ Cynthia Bourgeault in *THE WISDOM WAY OF KNOWING*

Still, what I want in my life  
is to be willing  
to be dazzled—  
to cast aside the weight of facts

and maybe even  
to float a little  
above this difficult world.  
I want to believe I am looking

into the white fire of a great mystery.  
I want to believe that the imperfections are nothing—  
that the light is everything—that it is more than the sum  
of each flawed blossom rising and fading. And I do.

~ Mary Oliver from “The Ponds” in  
*NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, VOL. ONE*



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