

Friends of Silence

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November 2021

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

Dear Friends ~ Some yoga practices incorporate a simple movement sequence called a *vinyasa* that a person returns to at regular intervals during the yoga flow. Physically speaking, this repetition is a way to return to the breath, come back into balance, and refocus the mind amidst other movements. In daily life, with all its clutter and clatter, it can be helpful to have habits or movements of the soul that—like a *vinyasa*—cycle our attention back to the gifts that surround us.

In that spirit, each November (when many in the U.S. celebrate Thanksgiving) I keep a daily gratitude journal to remind myself to notice the smallest moments of delight or surprise that I might overlook in my normally distracted state. Once, during the autumn my son was three I wrote,

Sitting alone behind the house, I was half-hidden behind a tree when G came running down the hill clutching the bike pump, gathered three different little bikes, and set them up in a row. Pretending to attach the needle side of the pump to one tricycle, he readied his arms to push down. That's when I saw his attention drawn away from his little workstation and instead up into the unfathomably blue November sky where six vultures circled above the house in migration, riding a thermal. I watched him in wonder, awe, and love... while he watched them in basically the same way.

This year when I return to that Thanksgiving practice, I will keep in mind Kurt Vonnegut's perfect advice: "I urge you to please notice when you are happy, and exclaim or murmur or think at some point, 'If this isn't nice, I don't know what is.'"

~ Joy



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The more alert we become to the blessings that flow into us from everything we touch, the more our own touch will bring blessing.

~ Br. David Stendl-Rast

If the only prayer we say to God is "thank you," that is enough.

~ Meister Eckhart

... prayer is not asking for what you think you want but asking to be changed in ways you can't imagine. To be made more grateful, more able to see the good in what you have been given instead of always grieving for what might have been.

~ Kathleen Norris in *AMAZING GRACE*

Beneath the intricate network of noise there's a still more persistent tapestry woven of whispers, murmurs and chants

It's the heaving breath of the very earth carrying along the prayer of all things: trees, ants, stones, creeks and mountains alike

All giving silent thanks and remembrance each moment, as a tug on a rosary bead while we hurry past, heedless of the mysteries

And, yet, every secret wants to be told every shy creature to approach and trust us if we patiently listen, with all our senses.

~ Yahia Lababidi from "Breath" in

BARELY THERE

The essence of prayer is thanksgiving.

~ Nan Merrill

Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer.

~ Maya Angelou



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If you provided a marriage feast and the thankless guests crowded at the table, gobbling the food without tasting it, and shoving one another away, so that some ate too much and some ate nothing, would you not be offended?

Or if, seated at your bountiful table, your guests picked and finicked over the food, eating only a little, refusing the wine and the dessert, claiming that to fill their bellies and rejoice would impair their souls, would you not be offended?

~ Wendell Berry from "Two Questions" in *ENTRIES*

What fascinates me so much is that every time we decide to be grateful, it will be easier to see new things to be grateful for. Gratitude begets gratitude, just as love begets love.

~ Henri Nouwen in *LIFE OF THE BELOVED*



Joy Houck Bauer

I have learned to quit speeding through life, always trying to do too many things too quickly, without taking the time to enjoy each day's doings. I think I always thought of real living as being high. I don't mean on drugs – I mean real living was falling in love, or when I got my first job, or when I was able to help somebody . . . In between the highs I was impatient – you know how it is – life seemed so Daily. Now I love the dailiness. I enjoy washing dishes, I enjoy cooking, I see my father's roses out the kitchen window. I like picking beans. I notice everything – birdsongs, the clouds, the sound of wind, the glory of sunshine after two weeks of rain. These are the things I took for granted before [cancer].

~ Olive Ann Burns quoted in *MITTEN STRINGS FOR GOD* by Katrina Kenison



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**When eating fruit,
remember the one who
planted the tree.**

~ Vietnamese proverb

Why do you spend money for
that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which
does not satisfy?

~ Isaiah 55:2

When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around.

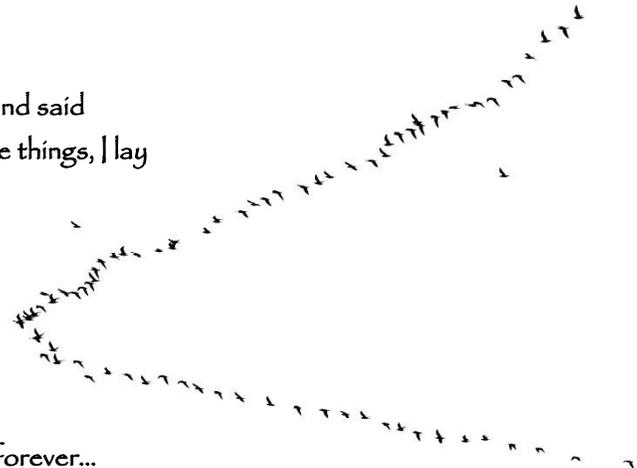
~ Willie Nelson

In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The god of dirt
came up to me many times and said
so many wise and delectable things, I lay
on the grass listening

to his dog voice,
crow voice,
frog voice; now,
he said, and now,
and never once mentioned forever...



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~ Mary Oliver from "One or Two Things" in
NEW AND SELECTED POEMS: VOLUME ONE

Desire is a tricky thing, the boiling of the body's wants...
I've been the one who has craved and craved until I could not see
beyond my own greed. There's a whole nation of us.
To forgive myself, I point to the earth as witness.
... tell me,
what it is to be quiet, and yet still breathing...
...to honor this: the length of days. To speak to the core
that creates and swallows, to speak not always to what's
shouting, but to what's underneath asking for nothing...

~ Ada Limon from "Notes on the Below" in *THE CARRYING*



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