

Friends of Silence

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

Dear friends, In one way of reckoning, January marks the turning of the year. A time for looking back, looking ahead, and most importantly looking inward. The crushing inequities and violence of our times, the hostile rhetoric, the choking fear-mongering and intolerance, threaten to lead us once more down a path of despair. If you’ve ever been out for a walk just after a heavy snowfall blankets the earth and garments the trees, you know the hushed magic, the grace-filled pause that fills the space with light. It’s as if for that brief moment the snow beseeches us to see the world with fresh eyes. “Stop in your tracks, cease chattering and crashing about. Yes, there are bare and broken branches, gnawed bones, littered paths, starving birds and hunting hawks. But I have another world in view. If only you can be still and imagine it.” Now is the time to act, not out of fear or judgment or despair, but out of the stillness of the Spirit and wisdom of the Light.

Because, as Clarissa Pinkola Estes says, “We were made for these times.”



May you grow still enough to hear the small noises earth makes in preparing for the long sleep of winter, so that you yourself may grow calm and grounded deep within. May you grow still enough to hear the trickling of water seeping into the ground, so that your soul may be softened and healed, and guided in its flow. May you grow still enough to hear the splintering of starlight in the winter sky and the roar at earth's fiery core. May you grow still enough to hear the stir of a single snowflake in the air, so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.



~ Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB, thanks to Toto Rendlen

We come into this stillness like snowfall, the air alive with angels, every blessed flake singular and mysterious, what’s outside quiet now, and changing form. Quickening, we breathe silence. Presence holds our lives in hush. Light dazzles. Listening, we learn to answer.

~ Jeanne Lohmann



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Let us accept the invitation, ever open, from the Stillness,
taste its exquisite sweetness, and heed its silent instruction.

~ Paul Brunton

Even with its storms, winter is the quietest time of year. There is nothing like the quiet after a storm. If you have had the privilege of being in the mountains right after a snowfall when there is no wind, nothing is moving, the snow is sucking up

every sound, and you hear a deep silence everywhere, you know how potent this silence is.
~from *EMPTY DANCING* by Adyashanti

True intelligence operates silently. Stillness is where creativity and solutions to problems are found.

~ from *STILLNESS SPEAKS* by Eckhart Tolle

We collect data, things, people, ideas, ‘profound experiences,’ never penetrating any of them . . . But there are other times. There are times when we stop. We sit still. We lose ourselves in a pile of leaves or its memory. We listen and breezes from a whole other world begin to whisper.

~ James Carroll, in *SILENCE AND SOLITUDE*, edited by Eileen Campbell

Let the soul banish all that disturbs; and let the body that envelops it be still, and all the fretting of the body, and all that surrounds it; let earth and sea and air be still; and heaven itself. And then feel the Spirit streaming, pouring, rushing into you from all sides, while you are quiet in this Peace.

~Plotinus, AD 205, thanks to Suzanne and Philip Norton

There are times not to answer the door, not to answer the phone, not to do undone things, but to rest in silence from everything. The world can wait for five minutes. In fact, no matter how busy we are, no matter how well organized, no matter how little rest we allow ourselves, we will never do all that needs to be done. But to do well what we are called to do, it is essential to nurture a capacity for inner stillness; such quiet, deep-down listening is itself prayer.

~ from *PRAYING WITH ICONS* by Jim Forest

“Tell me the weight of a snowflake,” a coal-mouse asked a wild dove. “Nothing more than nothing,” was the answer.

“In that case I must tell you a marvelous story,” the coal-mouse said. “I sat on a branch of a fir, close to its trunk, when it began to snow, not heavily, not in a giant blizzard, no, just like in a dream, without any violence. Since I didn’t have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the next snowflake dropped onto the branch—nothing more than nothing, as you say—the branch broke off.”

Having said that, the coal-mouse flew away. The dove, since Noah’s time an authority on the matter; thought about the story for a while and finally said to herself: “Perhaps there is only one person’s voice lacking for peace to come about in the world.”

~ from *NEW FABLES THUS SPOKE*—“The Caribou” by Kurt Kauter

In the stillness of the quiet, if we listen,
We can hear the whisper of the heart
giving strength to weakness,
courage to fear, hope to despair.

~ Dr. Howard Thurman in
“Science of the Mind” February 2008

My friends, do not lose heart...For years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement...To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these—to be fierce and to show mercy toward others; both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity...Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it.

~ Clarissa Pinkola Estes in “We Were Made For These Times”



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