

Friends of Silence

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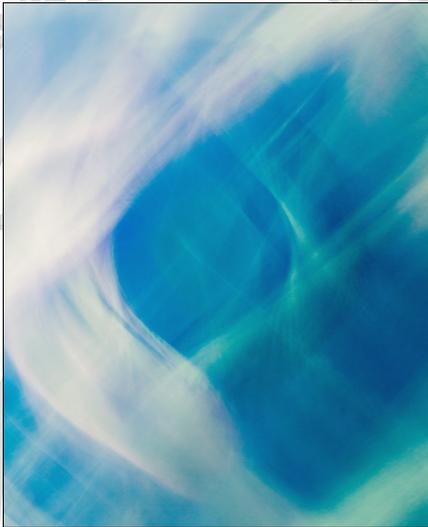
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November/December, 2019

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

Dear Friends ~ The expectant hush awaiting a baby’s first breath, the temporary cessation of wind in the eye of a hurricane, the awkward pause in a conversational misstep, the profound stillness of woods blanketed in snow—there are so many kinds of silence. Silence can be sad or sublime, scary or sustaining; a fretful silence soaked in fear and anxiety or a silence pregnant with hope, expectancy, longing. Beyond, or perhaps within, these is the Silence of mystery, of luminous moments, and of communion.

How can we embrace the silence that carries the whispers of wisdom? Can we learn to hover on the outer edge of comforting bustle long enough to fall into unknown depths of sustaining stillness? Do we create sacred spaces to hold the stillness full of meaning? Is it intentional practice—the disciplined mind of the Dalai Lama’s teachings—that leads us into the womb of silence? Or is it grace—the “surprised-by-joy” kind in CS Lewis’ writing—that brings us these silent gifts? However we encounter Silence, we name her “Friend.”



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Plunge into the ocean of God
through stillness in the spirit
and silence within the soul.

~ Nan Merrill

To learn how to wait, how to be silent, how to befriend the dark... Thus do we prepare to be creative. There is a waiting, a silence and a darkness in all birthing. Heart’s winter is already a filling womb.

~ from *YEAR OF THE HEART* by Daniel J. O’Leary

Now let your great and wise and powerful
be as the poor and foolish little ones:

unembarrassed to receive the incredible gift,
and not knotted in guilt over your lack of worth,
and not struggling to “earn” what cannot be deserved,
but just simply, joyfully accepting of all
that is given so humbly and gladly in Love.

~ from *ENCOUNTER AT BETHLEHEM*
by Jean Jones Andersen

When I notice the spaces
between sounds and the spaces
between words and also the
spaces between my thoughts and
the background silence behind
everything, I realize that all these
spaces are the same space. This
space is the entry point. It is the
transformational vortex, the
corridor, the window to Spirit.

~ from *EVERYDAY IMMORTALITY*
by Deepak Chopra

The restless hollowness which surfaces into our consciousness when we reflect in silence is already the nearness of God, who is like the pure light which, spread over everything, hides itself by making everything else visible in the silent lowliness of its being. The Incarnation urges us, in the experience of solitude, to trust the nearness—it is not emptiness; to let go and then we will find; to give up and then we will be rich.

~ from *THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS* by Karl Rahner

The silence of the present moment was awe-inspiring in its power, oceanic was the word that came to mind, as it carried away everything in its path. The flow of our liturgy had become one with nature's incessant movement from light to dark and back again.

~ from *DAKOTA: A SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY* by Kathleen Norris

"How silent it is," he whispered. I started to shiver. The smoke from our stovepipe cast crazy shadows on the moonlit snow. "Come, let's go back in," he said softly. "Listen," I requested. The silence beat upon our empty ears. Not a sound. Nothing. My mind stretched into the wilderness night, listening. It was different from the muffled silence of falling snow which sucks up every noise. Neither was it the silence of plugged ears. This was the clear, cold music of thousands of miles of nothing to hear. We lingered, breathing it in. "It's the silence of a million ears," I said at last. "Of life, waiting."

~ from *ARCTIC DAUGHTER* by Jean Aspen

No writing on the solitary, meditative dimensions of life can say anything that has not already been said better by the wind in the pine trees...or the silence and peace that is "heard" when the rain wanders freely among the hills and forests. But what can the wind say where there is no hearer?

~ Thomas Merton in *THOUGHTS ON SOLITUDE*

In silence learn to give of yourself, forgive others, live with gratitude. Then you need not seek inner peace: Peace will find you!

~ from *LUMEN CHRISTI...HOLY WISDOM* by Nan Merrill

Silence wells up from an emptiness within us, but it is an emptiness freely and fully accepted... A moment comes when silence alone can express the extraordinary richness in our heart. Such a silence enfolds a person gently and powerfully and always comes from within. It establishes a zone of peace and quiet around the one who is silent, where God can be irresistibly felt as present.

~ André Loup in *THE WAY OF SIMPLICITY* by Esther deWaal

Even though working actively for justice is essential, one of the greatest gifts we can give to a troubled world is the presence of a peaceful heart... Wrapping ourselves in silence, solitude, and gratitude is a sure way to open our hearts again to perspective and simplicity.

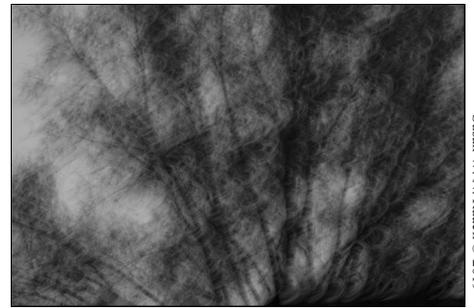
~ from *REFLECTIONS* by Robert J. Wicks

If we have courage, we take silence as medicine to cure us from our social ills, the suffering of self-centered alienation. In silence, sacred silence, we stand naked like trees in winter, all our secrets visible under our skin. And like winter's tree, we appear dead but are alive.

~ from *THE FRUITFUL DARKNESS* by Joan Halifax

| part the out-thrusting branches
and come in beneath
the blessed and the blessing trees.
Though | am silent
there is singing around me.
Though | am dark
there is vision around me.
Though | am heavy
there is flight around me.

~ "Woods" by Wendell Berry



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We are so grateful to all of you for your gracious encouragement and generous support. We wrote truthfully in our October appeal about the challenges as well as the joys of producing this Letter. In an effort to catch our collective breath and to bring the Letter to you nearer the beginning of each month, we are combining the November and December issues, just for now. In January, we'll share about how we imagine weaving the Letter in 2020. Until then, may all be well with you.