

Friends of Silence

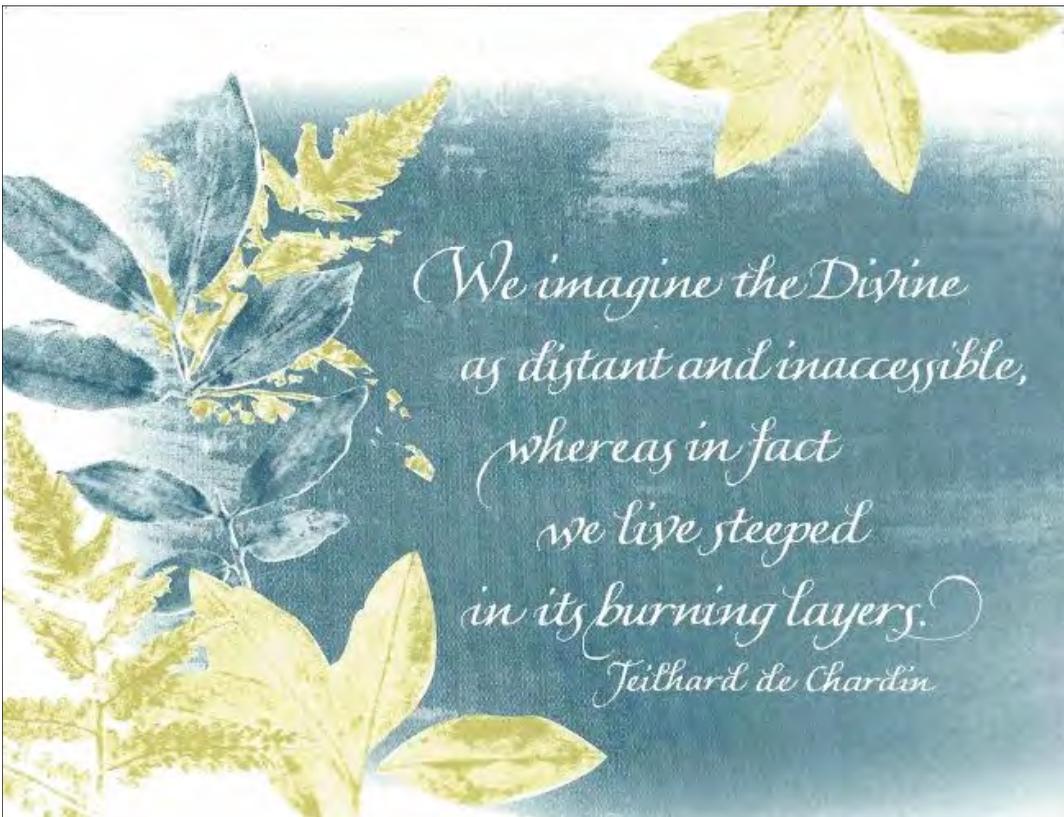
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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”

Happy summer, dear friends! The philosopher Martin Buber spoke of two ways to engage with the world. He said that modern society emphasizes and values the “I-it” way where every creature, including other humans and even the earth itself, is an object or collection of qualities and quantities to be experienced, sought, known, and put to some purpose. To frame relationships instead in terms of I and thou means to move from experience to encounter. Beyond language, beyond theology or science, beyond answers is the sacred space where I and thou might meet. Perhaps it is in shaping our relationships into encounters with mystery rather than understanding them as something tangible for us to grasp, that we may discover ourselves in the presence of the eternal Thou.



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Not WHAT I am but THAT I am,
not WHAT God is but THAT God is.

~from THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING, anonymous



Speaking of spirituality, a Sufi master once said,
“A river passes through many countries, and each
claims it for its own. But there is only one river.”

~from BEYOND RELIGION: 8 ALTERNATIVE
PATHS TO THE SACRED by David N. Elkins

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Just as we cannot leave contemplation to contemplatives, we cannot leave mysticism to mystics. It would mean cutting off the roots of human life. By putting mystics on a pedestal in our mind, high, out of reach, we don't do justice to them, nor to ourselves either. Paraphrasing what Ruskin said about being an artist, we could say: A mystic is not a special kind of human being; rather, every human being is a special kind of mystic. I might just as well rise to this challenge and become that unique, irreplaceable mystic that only I can become. There never was and never will be anyone exactly like me. If I fail to experience God in my own unique way, that experience will forever remain in the shadow of possibility. But if I do, I will know life by the divine life within me.

~ from GRATEFULNESS, THE HEART OF PRAYER by Br. David Steindl-Rast

...real Wisdom can be given and received only in a state of presence...Presence is the straight and narrow gate through which one passes to Wisdom.

~from WISDOM WAY OF KNOWING by Cynthia Bourgeault

Seekers are people of faith even if they do not belong to a particular religion. Faith in this sense is deeper than one's belief system. Belief systems belong to the level of pluralism; faith to the level of unity. Faith is constitutive of human nature itself. It is openness to Ultimate Mystery before it is broken down into various belief systems. It is the acceptance of authentic living with all its creativity and the acceptance of dying with its potential for a greater fullness of life.

~ from SEEKERS OF ULTIMATE MYSTERY by Thomas Keating

Sometimes, when a bird cries out,
Or the wind sweeps through a tree,
Or a dog howls in a far off farm,
I hold still and listen a long time.

My soul turns and goes back to the place
Where, a thousand forgotten years ago,
The bird and the blowing wind
Were like me, were my brothers and sisters.

My soul turns into a tree . . .

~ Herman Hesse

Faith is not about understanding the ways of God. It is not about maneuvering God into a position of human subjugation, making a God who is a benign deity who exists to see life as we do. Faith, in fact, is not about understanding at all. It is about awe in the face of the God of all. And it is awe that inspires an alleluia to the human soul.

The Infinite Voice speaks out in many voices—or It isn't Infinite.
~Arthur Waskow

Faith is about reverencing precisely what we do not understand—the mystery of the Life Force that generates life for us all. It is about grounding ourselves in a universe so intelligent, so logical, so clearly loving that only a God in love with life could possibly account for it completely.

~ from UNCOMMON GRATITUDE by Joan Chittister

Where is God in this picture? God is all over the place. God is up there, down here, inside my skin and out. God is the web, the energy, the space, the light—not captured in them, as if those concepts were more real than what unites them—but revealed in that singular, vast net of relationship that animates everything there is.

~from THE LUMINOUS WEB by Barbara Brown Taylor

Within us and around us there is an invisible world; this is where each of us comes from...When you cross over from the invisible into this physical world, you bring with you a sense of belonging to the invisible that you can never lose or finally cancel...When you enter the world, you come to live on the threshold between the visible and the invisible...Because the invisible cannot be seen or glimpsed with the human eye, it belongs largely to the unknown. Still there are occasional moments when the invisible seems to become faintly perceptible... Now you belong fully neither to the visible nor to the invisible. This is precisely what kindles and rekindles all your longing and your hunger to belong. You are both artist and pilgrim of the threshold.



~from ETERNAL ECHOES by John O'Donohue