

# Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ As nature slows down and deepens into stillness, we too turn inward and settle into quiet contemplation. Moving from the practice of silence into the presence of Silence, one might ask: “Who or what are we listening for? And how does this inner journey heal the agonizing cries of the world in a time when there is so much to be done?” In a conference on protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed, after much talk on strategies, Rabbi Nina Beth Carlin remarked, “We work WAY upstream—we work with the soul.” Perhaps this inner journey of silence is also a kind of working “way upstream” in the watershed of life. A few snippets from an article on “Why Silence Amplifies the Spirit” caught my eye:

Tina Toubert, Ode Magazine, 2008

If we’re no longer able to be quiet and listen, we can’t hear our own voices or those of our fellow human beings and our greater environment...Being silent means more than just holding your tongue. It means listening for the softest, most subtle sound of all—the sound of the soul... “Because God whispers.”



The restlessness of the human heart is ever absorbed in a longing that finds rest only in that which transcends all longing...I myself lie outside in the backyard at night, alone and in silence, as if waiting for a huge mountain to rise over the trees with the moon each evening. The mountain never appears. Nothing usually happens. But the sheer delight that’s mine each night in that time of utterly thoughtless silence is hard to describe. How do we explain the deepest desires that we have? The very desire is what gives us pleasure, not just its gratification.

~from THE SOLACE OF FIERCE LANDSCAPES by Belden C. Lane



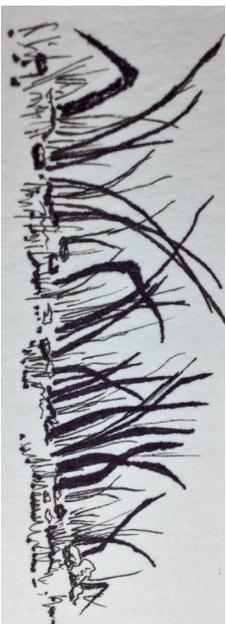
“Starry Night” by Van Gogh

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The louder our world today is, the deeper  
God seems to remain in silence. Silence is  
the language of eternity; noise passes.

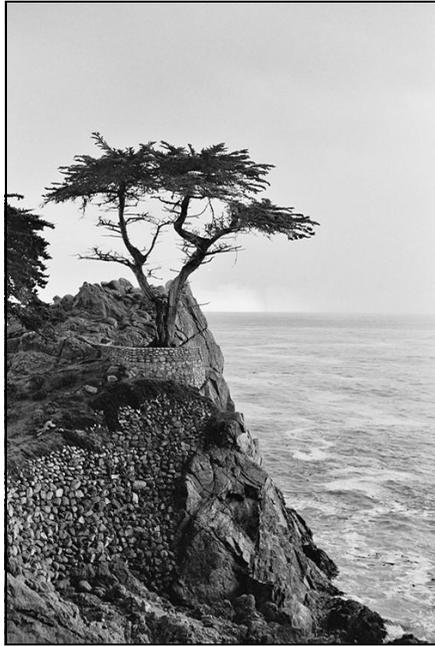
~Gertrud von Le Fort, thanks to Barb Yatsевич



If we had a keen vision of all that is ordinary in human life,  
it would be like hearing the grass grow or the squirrel’s  
heart beat, and we should die of that roar which is the  
other side of silence.

~George Eliot

Friends of Silence



At first silence had seemed a deprivation, a symbol of an unwanted isolation. I had resented the solitude of my life and fought it. But gradually the enveloping quiet became a positive element, almost a presence... It seemed to hum, gently but melodiously, and to orchestrate the ideas that I was contending with, until they started to sing too, to vibrate, and reveal an unexpected resonance. After a time I found that I could almost listen to the silence, which had a dimension all of its own. I discovered that I felt at home and alive in the silence: it had become my teacher.

~from THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE by Karen Armstrong, thanks to Rodney J. Ferris

Silence is the language spoken by solitude. There is something awesome and breathtaking about real silence; it is numinous, pulling us out of self-containment and calling us toward the invisible.

Spiritual seekers “home in” on silence as homing pigeons to their roost, because therein lies the language for personal communication with the sacred. Silence accompanies us into our innermost selves where we are present to the sacred. When word breaks into that kind of silence, there is communion.  
~from THE LANGUAGE OF SILENCE by Peter-Damian Belisle, thanks to Br. Xavier

I believe that God is in me  
as the sun is in the colour and fragrance of a flower —  
the Light in my darkness, the Voice in my Silence.

~Helen Keller, thanks to Liz Stewart

Now is the moment for contemplatives. But what a vibrant presence we should have in the world, and in the depth of our silence. Not an escape, but a penetration to the very heart. That is what now I should like to understand and to make

understood – and, most of all, to live. Respect for contemplative values in the world will not come because we preach about them, but because in our life of deep silence we are totally human.

~from ABHISHIKTANANDA, ed. by James Stuart, thanks to S. Pascaline, OSB

We find our quiet minds as we sit still with our breath, as we make small jottings in our books, and as we practice silent waiting. Then one day, “the little ways” open into broad expanses.

~ from ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE by Marv and Nancy Hiles



Silence transforms one from a seeker of the Divine into a vessel of the Divine.

~Geoffrey W Dennis

People remark that they feel “out of place,” “out of sorts,” “depressed,” or “bored” when a true moment of quiet descends on them. This is how fundamentally exiled we are from the natural texture of our own silence. As modern people we don’t know what to do with this great teacher of teachers. She can be an uncomfortable teacher and guide. Yet great power and healing wait in the folds of silence and solitude. Mirroring the creation of the universe, all great things have come forth from the ancient weave of silence.

~ from THE MIST-FILLED PATH by Frank MacEowen



Eternal God, since silence seems to be  
the voice of holiness, the only language  
you speak directly,  
then | pray to be steeped in it  
until | fear it less and welcome it  
as an usher to grace,  
a narrator of sacred mysteries;  
until silence cease the fretful conversations  
of my mind with too little else than itself;  
until silence calm my heart to an ease,  
convene my senses to an anchored focus,  
hush my tongue to a chastened hold;  
until | discern in the silence  
an answer to that necessary question  
which, for the very life of me,  
it has not yet occurred to me to ask;  
until | am stretched alive and deep  
to its dimensions, and catch,  
at last and ready,  
your assuring wink at me. Amen.

~from MY HEART IN MY MOUTH by Ted Loder,  
thanks to Kimberly Wuest

Teach me the power and strength of silence  
that | may go into the world  
as still as a mouse  
in the depths of my heart.

~Mechtild of Magdeburg