

Friends of Silence

Vol. XXVIII, No. 4

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April 2015

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

Happy spring, Friends! Wood frogs have returned with their raucous declarations of fecundity. Peeling back layers of brittle, brown oak leaves, I am overjoyed to find beneath the debris of winter tender shoots of green pushing up toward the light. We need to re-imagine our understanding of our relationship with nature—not above or apart but within and among. Can we peel back dead layers of hubris and abuse to rediscover living ways of reciprocity and gratitude? Move beyond using nature, whether as mere metaphor or possession for plunder, toward a relationship cradled in communion and covenant? How can we fuse science and ecology with creative arts and spirituality so that all our learning and teaching and dancing and walking might plant seeds of renewal and resilience and healing? So that we all—together—might raise our raucous voices, might grow upward toward the light.



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The earth is a living, conscious being. In company with cultures of many different times and places we name these things as sacred: air, fire, water, and earth. Whether we see them as the breath, energy, blood, and the body of the Mother, or as the blessed gifts of a Creator, or as symbols of the interconnected systems that sustain life, we know that nothing can live without them...All people, all living things, are part of the earth life, and so are sacred. No one of us stands higher or lower than any other.

Only justice can assure balance: only ecological balance can sustain freedom. Only in freedom can that fifth sacred thing we call spirit flourish in its full diversity.

To honor the sacred is to create conditions in which nourishment, sustenance, habitat, knowledge, freedom, and beauty can thrive. To honor the sacred is to make love possible.

~from THE FIFTH SACRED THING by Starhawk

To the dull mind all nature is leaden. To the illumined mind the whole world burns and sparkles with light.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

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The human venture depends absolutely on a quality of awe and reverence and joy in the Earth and all that lives and grows upon the Earth.
~Thomas Berry



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White bird flying in the silence
take my soul with you.

I, a sparrow in God's sleeve,
nestled in the creamy folds,
fed with manna sweet as honey
from the honeycomb.

White bird flying
in the silence,
take my soul with you.

~from INSIDE DREAMING
by Shirley Daves

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Friends of Silence

Why ever did you trust us with the Earth,
Your jewel, Your pearl of great price?

Why did you trust us with Water,
pure crystal in the sunlight?

With rain-forests
lush with table-sized leaves?

What do You see in us?

~from WILD SEEDS by Francis Rothluebber



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We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us. Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty about us, neither old nor young, sick or well, but immortal. I am a captive. I am bound. Love of pure unblemished Nature seems to overmaster and blur out of sight all other objects and consideration.... As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing. I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm, and the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers, and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can. ~John Muir



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Teach us that even as the wonder of the stars in the heavens only reveals itself in the silence of the night, so the wonder of life reveals itself in the silence of the heart. In the silence of our heart we may see the scattered leaves of all the universe bound by love. ~from THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Our life is a faint tracing on the surface of mystery, like the idle, curved tunnels of leaf miners on the face of a leaf. We must somehow take a wider view, look at the whole landscape, really see it, and describe what's going on here. Then we can at least wail the right question into the swaddling band of darkness, or, if it comes to that, choir the proper praise. ~ from PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK by Annie Dillard

As we walk on the earth, encouraging a sense of care and kindness, it is as if the earth itself responds – up through the soles of our feet we experience the sustaining nature of the earth...We feel ourselves participating in a calm yet joyous celebration of the earth and the life sustained by the earth. ~from REFLECTIONS ON EVERYDAY LIFE by Paramananda

The divine feminine encourages interdependence, interconnectedness, and mutuality. Instead of dominating and controlling nature, the divine feminine represents reverence for nature's web of life. Instead of dismissing feelings and emotions, the divine feminine interprets them as a source of wisdom. ~from SOUL SISTERS by Pythia Peay

A healed relation to each other and to the earth then calls for a new consciousness, a new symbolic culture and spirituality. We need to transform our inner psyches and the way we symbolize the interrelations of men and women, humans and earth, humans and the divine, the divine and the earth. Ecological healing is a theological and psychic-spiritual process...we must see the work of eco-justice and the work of spirituality as interrelated, the inner and outer aspects of one process of conversion and transformation. ~from GAIA AND GOD by Rosemary Radford Ruether



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What we need are guardians—guardians committed to the middle path of mindfulness and dedicated to the enormous task of restoring and healing our ravaged planet. Guardians who have penetrated the anthropocentric notions of our civilization and who, as Aldo Leopold said, can begin to “think like a mountain” and acknowledge that we are only “plain embers of the biotic community.” ~Grove Burnett in “Spiritual Footing for Environmentalists” from A JOYFUL PATH by Thich Nhat Hanh

Watching gardeners label their plants
| vow with all beings
to practice the old horticulture
And let plants identify me.

~Robert Aiken Roshi, thanks to Tina Beneman

We all have rituals in our lives; we have simply forgotten that in our original way of living on the earth, these rituals were sacred, not secular. These rituals were designed to remind us over and over and over again of our true relationship to life: that of a grateful, amazed supplicant at the feet of Mystery. ~from CALLING THE CIRCLE by Christina Baldwin

The moral covenant of reciprocity calls us to honor our responsibilities for all we have been given, for all that we have taken. It's our turn now, long overdue. Let us hold a giveaway for Mother Earth, spread our blankets out for her and pile them high with gifts of our own making. Imagine the books, the paintings, the poems, the clever machines, the compassionate acts, the transcendent ideas, the perfect tools. The fierce defense of all that has been given. Gifts of mind, hands, heart, voice, and vision all offered up on behalf of the earth. Whatever our gift, we are called to give it and to dance for the renewal of the world. In return for the privilege of breath.

~from BRAIDING SWEETGRASS by Robin Wall Kimmerer