

Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ In a world filled with such ugliness and hatred, violence and sorrow, is beauty a luxury we really cannot afford? A distraction or false covering like the “sheep’s clothing” thrown hurriedly over the wolf’s crouching back? Or is beauty as necessary to our souls as the air we breathe is to our bodies? Nurturing beauty is a way to see beyond and within, to envision other possibilities, to dare to give care and attention to wholeness. In Matthew Fox’s ORIGINAL BLESSING, he quotes Adrienne Rich as she names the world’s desperate need for the unleashing of our creative power:

the passion to make and make again
where such unmaking reigns

the refusal to be a victim

we have lived with violence so long

Let us, therefore, choose making and remaking. Let us seek out beauty, pay attention to it, cultivate it, and create it in our work, in our homes, in our relationships, and our land.



It is wisest and best to fix our attention on the beautiful and the good, and dwell as little as possible on the evil and false...

~ Richard Cecil



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Knowledge was inherent in all things.
The world was a library and its books
Were the stones, leaves, grass, brooks...
We learned to do what only the students
of nature ever learn, that was to feel beauty.

~ Luther Standing Bear

The surfaces of the world are aesthetically uneven.
You come around a bend in the road and the world
suddenly falls open. When we come upon beautiful things . . . they act like small tears
in the surface of the world that pull us through to some vaster space.

~ from ON BEAUTY AND BEING JUST by Elaine Scarry



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Passing beauties are only the
fugitive reflections of the eternal.
~ Eliphas Levi

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Who can afford to live without beauty? . . . If we get lost in dark despair, beauty takes us back to Center.

~ Piero Ferrucci

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Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything that is beautiful; for beauty is God's handwriting—a wayside sacrament. Welcome it in every fair face, in every fair sky, in every fair flower, and thank God for it as a cup of blessing... ~ Ralph W. Emerson



We are living in a world of beauty, but few of us open our eyes to see it. ~ Lorado Taft

One summer night, out on a flat headland, all but surrounded by the waters of the bay, the horizons were remote and distant rims on the edge of space. Millions of stars blazed in darkness, and on the far shore a few lights burned in cottages. Otherwise there was no reminder of human life. My companion and I were

alone with the stars: the misty river of the Milky Way flowing across the sky, the patterns of the constellations standing out bright and clear, a blazing planet low on the horizon. It occurred to me that if this were a sight that could be seen only once in a century, this little headland would be thronged with spectators. But it can be seen many scores of nights in any year, and so the lights burned in the cottages and the inhabitants probably gave not a thought to the beauty overhead; and because they could see it almost any night, perhaps they never will.

~Rachel Carson

Beauty is harmony manifesting its own intrinsic nature in the world of form.

~ Manly P. Hall

Every true artist does feel, consciously or unconsciously, that [he] is touching transcendental truths; that [his] images are shadows of things seen through the veil. In

other words, the natural mystic does know that there is something *there*; something behind the clouds or within the trees; but [he] believes that the pursuit of beauty is the way to find it... ~G. K. Chesterton in THE EVERLASTING MAN

Beauty takes us beyond the visible to the height of consciousness, past the ordinary to the mystical, away from the expedient to the endlessly true. ~ Joan Chittister

Art is both love and friendship, and understanding; the desire to give. It is not charity, which is the giving of things, it is more than kindness, which is the giving of self. It is both the taking and giving of beauty, the turning out to the light of the inner folds of awareness of the spirit.

~Ansel Adams in a letter to Cedric Wright, 1937, as quoted in ART AS A WAY OF LIFE, ed. by Roderick MacIver

I chose botany because I wanted to learn about why asters and goldenrod looked so beautiful together... Why is the world so beautiful? It could so easily be otherwise: flowers could be ugly to us and still fulfill their own purpose. But they're not... Goldenrods and asters appear very similarly to bee eyes and human eyes. We both think they're beautiful. Their striking contrast when they grow together makes them the most attractive target in the whole meadow, a beacon for bees. Growing together, both receive more pollinator visits than they would if they were growing alone... That September pairing of purple and gold is lived reciprocity; its wisdom is that the beauty of one is illuminated by the radiance of the other... When I am in their presence, their beauty asks me for reciprocity, to be the complementary color, to make something beautiful in response.

~ from BRAIDING SWEETGRASS by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and respect for strength, in search of my mother's garden, I found my own. ~ Alice Walker



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To be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be attached to them, this is a great service. Providence expects that we should make this world our own, and not lie in it as though it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own through some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul. Your own experience shows you the difference between the beautiful,

the tender, the hospitable, and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful. Gross utility kills beauty. We now have all over the world huge productions of things, huge organizations, huge administrations of empire—all obstructing the path of life. Civilization is waiting for a great consummation, for an expression of its soul in beauty. This must be your contribution to the world.

~ from A TAGORE READER ed. by Amiya Chakravarty, as reprinted in AN ALMANAC FOR THE SOUL by Marv and Nancy Hiles