

Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends, In the Christian tradition Advent is a time of waiting and a time of preparing. It is a season for contemplating who we are, how we fit into the world, and what we hope for its future. For many of us, November is also incredibly busy with the last flurry of activity before winter descends in earnest. Out where I live in the woods away from the noise and bustle of city and town, one does not need to ask if there is enough silence—there is plenty of silence. Yet paying attention to it, listening to it, and allowing it to penetrate beyond the chatter of mind and angst of heart—that is a whole different kind of waiting, a whole different kind of silence—the kind in which something else may perhaps be heard.



Maybe we need more silence. Maybe we simply need now and then to look up at the silent stars and lose ourselves to be set free.

~ Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB

Silence is an active waiting animated by faith and love.

~Pierre Lacout

Silence has many dimensions. It can be a regression and an escape, a loss of self, or it can be presence, awareness, unification, self-discovery. Negative silence blurs and confuses our identity, and we lapse into daydreams or diffuse anxieties. Positive silence pulls us together and makes us realize who we are, who we might be, and the distance between the two. Hence, positive silence implies a choice, and what Paul Tillich called the “courage to be.”

~ from LOVE AND LIVING by Thomas Merton



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Listen to the silence as it echoes around you,
Ancient spirits dance to it.

~ Amber Coverdale Sumrall

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Walking, I am listening to a deeper way.
Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me.
Be still, they say. Watch and listen.

~Linda Hogan, in WALK IN A RELAXED
WAY by Joyce Kilmer

Friends of Silence



The purpose of silence is a directed stillness.
~S. Wendy Beckett

Every great activity and event, every true encounter with the Divine must begin by our turning off the mind and turning within to that place where true wisdom resides. Ideas are born in the quiet of the mind. Nature gives us the model for our spiritual endeavors, teaching us to silence outer confusion and

noise so Spirit's soft voice can be heard. We encounter the Divine in the stillness at the center of our being.
~Roger Juline

We do not need to be experts or geniuses to remember that all of existence is precious. We do not need cathedrals to remind ourselves to experience the sacred. We need only to be deeply respectful of what is fundamentally true; and that is what we rediscover when we center ourselves in silence.
~Gunilla Norris, from INVITING SILENCE

As the mind becomes silent
the soul becomes eloquent.
~BhagirathMajmudar

There is a silence into which the world cannot intrude. There is an ancient peace you carry in your heart and have not lost.
~ from A COURSE IN MIRACLES, as quoted in 365 PRESCRIPTIONS FOR THE SOUL by Dr. Bernie S. Siegel

If the heart of prayer is listening, what is it we listen to when we pray? The obvious answer is God's voice, yet great care is needed lest we presume the divine voice is like an ordinary human one. The essence of God's voice is silence...To be silent is to empty oneself of the din of transitory distractions so that one becomes fully receptive to the silence that always and everywhere underlies them. The silence thus cultivated is not a void so much as an expectant readiness, a sensitive receptivity, to the stillness hidden in the noise of daily life.
~from SPIRITUALTY OF THE HANDMAID by Kerry Walters

Learn to get in touch with the silence within yourself and know that everything in this life has a purpose.
~ Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Today I was walking with some friends in Armstrong Redwoods Park and I was astonished at those trees. The more I looked at them, the more I came to appreciate them. It was completely still, unlike our tropical forests in India, where elephants trumpet, tigers roar, and there is a constant symphony of sound.

Here everything was still, and I enjoyed the silence so much that I remembered these lines of John Keats. It is a perfect simile for the silence of the mind, when all personal conflicts are resolved, when all selfish desires come to rest. All of us are looking for this absolute peace, this inward, healing silence in the redwood forest of the mind. When we find it, we will become small forces for peace wherever we go.
~ from WORDS TO LIVE BY by Eknath Easwaran

And then there crept a little noiseless noise
among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves.
~ John Keats



As one contemplates, penetrating deeper and deeper into the nature of reality, one leaves the sensible world behind, transcends the subject/object mode of perception, and experiences one's soul.
~Shimon Malin

There is immense power in stillness...You may not see or feel the operations of this silent force, but be assured it is always working mightily, and will work for you, if you only get your spirit still enough to be carried along by the currents of its power.
~Hannah Whitall Smith

You do not need to leave your room . . . Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked. It has no choice. It will roll in ecstasy at your feet.
~ Franz Kafka

God's breath is heard in quietness and felt in stillness. Beware the noises and clamor of ego which drown out the divine whisper.
~from MESSAGES FROM THE ANCESTORS: WISDOM FOR THE WAY by Margellen Flynn Kelley and

There is a voice that doesn't use words. Listen.
~Rumi