

Friends of Silence

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

Greetings Friends ~ How much of the turmoil seething all around us comes from masks put on to hide deep-seated fears—fear of losing control, fear of being discounted or abandoned, fear of difference, fear of not enough to go around, fear of change, fear of death? The insistent, brash voices that would stir up our fears, playing on our insecurities; and the unpredictable, violent actions of those that relish our terror—both feed on and corrupt our sense of vulnerability. Now is the time for courage, for honestly acknowledging our fears so that they can become bridges rather than walls. The fearful heart cannot engage; the anxieties that keep us awake at night close off the very oxygen we need to breathe. What if bringing our own fears out into the open could disarm the fear and anger coming our way from others? What if our vulnerabilities could teach us to overcome “fight or flight” with compassion? Finding a third way of standing fast against hate and injustice while loving our enemies brings us face to face with fear. How do we cultivate courage?



Dom Hélder Câmara by Linda DeGraf © 1983

The enemy is fear. We think it is hate; but it is really fear. ~ Gandhi

The process of transforming fear isn't pretending that we have no fear, but embracing fear as a tool for learning and growth.

~ Kay Gilley in *THE ALCHEMY OF FEAR*

Our word “courage” comes from the French word *coeur*, “heart.” Courage is a willingness to act from the heart, to let your heart lead the way, not knowing what will be required of you next, and if you can do it.

~ Jean Shinoda Bolen in *GODS IN EVERYMAN*

Those who are willing to be vulnerable move among the mysteries.

~ Theodore Roethke

We can never know what strengths and revelations might be on the other side of our fears until we face them and feel them all the way through. True positive thinking is the mental stance of surrender, simply trusting the process. We learn to accept what is.

~ from *AWAKENING IN TIME* by Jacqueline Small

We live in a time when the greatest form of courage is to act as if our lives made a difference.

~ William Sullivan in *THE SECRET OF THE INCAS*

Fear is such a powerful emotion for humans that when we allow it to take us over, it drives compassion right out of our hearts.

~ Thomas Aquinas

What is this darkness? What is its name?

Call it: an aptitude for sensitivity. Call it: a rich sensitivity which will make you whole.

Call it: your potential for vulnerability.

~ Meister Eckhart

If you pass through raging waters
in the sea, you shall not drown.
If you walk amid the burning flames,
you shall not be harmed.
If you stand before the pow'r of hell
and death is at your side, know that I
am with you through it all.

Be not afraid,
I go before you always.
Come follow me, and
I will give you rest.

~ lyrics from "Be Not Afraid"
by John Michael Talbot

I will not die an unlived life. I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to inhabit my days, to allow my living to open me, to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise.
~ Dawna Markova

We become fearful of one another when our loving nature is blocked. Ignorance is at the root of all bigotry and injustice.
~ Kevin Ryerson in *SPIRIT COMMUNICATION*

Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor, for patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword. It both emboldens the blood just as it narrows the mind. And when the drums of war have reached a fever pitch and the blood boils with hate and the mind has closed the leader will have no need in seizing the rights of the citizenry. Rather, the citizenry, infused with fear and blinded by patriotism, will offer up all of their rights unto the leader and gladly so. How do I know? For this is what I have done. And I am Caesar.
~ WAR by Julius Caesar

Hope is some extraordinary spiritual grace that God gives us to control our fears, not to oust them.
~ Vincent McNabb

A Japanese friend explained to me... "the plum [is] for courage because the plum puts forth blossoms while the snow is still on the ground."
~ Anne Morrow Lindbergh in *GIFT FROM THE SEA*

A blessing of fear in these years is that it invites us to become the fullness of ourselves. It comes to us in the nighttime of the soul to tell us to rise to new selves in fresh and exciting ways—for our sake, of course, but for the sake of the rest of the world, as well.
~ Joan Chittister in *THE GIFT OF YEARS*



~from "Children Playing in the Snow under Plum Trees in Bloom" by Yōshū Chikanobu, The Met collection



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At the bottom the only courage that is demanded of us is to have courage for the most strange, the most singular, and the most inexplicable that we may encounter. That humankind has in this sense been cowardly, has done life endless harm; the whole so-called "spirit-world," death, all those things that are so akin to us, have by daily parrying been so crowded out of life that the senses with which we could have grasped them are atrophied. To say nothing of God.

~ from *LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET* by Rainier Maria Rilke

Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.
~ Anais Nin

It is as if God planted a great big kiss in the middle of our spirit and all the wounds, doubts, and guilt feelings were healed at the same moment. The experience of being loved by the Ultimate Mystery banishes every fear.

~ Thomas Keating

Let nothing disturb you;
Let nothing make you afraid;
All things pass;
Yet God is unchanging.
Patience
Is enough for everything.
You who have God
Lack nothing.
God alone is sufficient.

~ Teresa of Avila