

Friends of Silence

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

Quiet greetings, dear friends,
*In silence and solitude you will come to meet the Beloved of your heart.
For Silence is power, the power of the Divine Lover blessing and transforming you.
Seek always the Eternal Flame ever shining in your heart,
and let yourself be nourished and refreshed in the Silence.*
~ Nan Merrill

Nan was intimately acquainted with the mysterious power of Silence, which drew her on a journey that blessed us all; a journey that today, 30 years later, still nourishes and refreshes us. Silence cannot be seen, or touched, or heard. Yet it is palpable, transformative. Nan experienced it as the power of the Divine Lover, and her calling was to spread that love through Friends of Silence and the monthly Letter. Nestled in this issue is a letter that traces the mysterious power of Silence in Nan's life and the movement she founded. The letter asks for your companionship and help to carry that journey onward for another 30 years and beyond. We hope you will take a moment to read it, even those of you who usually receive the Letter via email only. Whoever and wherever we are, we come together in Silence, linked by a desire to turn our attention to that inner world, that place of deepest Belonging, that can be apprehended in stillness and solitude. We come together in gratitude for the power of Silence and for the gift of our deeply connected, though far flung, community of souls. May you ever “let yourself be nourished and refreshed in the Silence.”



May you grow still enough to hear the small noises earth makes in preparing for the long sleep of winter, so that you yourself may grow calm and grounded deep within. May you grow still enough to hear the trickling of water seeping into the ground, so that your soul may be softened and healed, and guided in its flow. May you grow still enough to hear the splintering of starlight in the winter sky and the roar at earth's fiery core. May you grow still enough to hear the stir of a single snowflake in the air, so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.

~ Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB

Carve out a day every week, or an hour a day, or a moment each hour, and abide in loving silence with the Friend. Feel the frenetic concerns of life in the world fall away, like the last leaves of autumn being lifted from the tree in the arms of a zephyr. Be the bare tree.

~ St. John of the Cross

If we were not so single-minded about keeping our lives moving, and could do nothing, perhaps a huge silence might interrupt the sadness of never understanding ourselves.

~ Pablo Neruda

Mirroring the creation of the universe, all great things have come from the ancient weave of silence. It is a part of us that we must welcome home.

~ Frank MacEwen

It is becoming more and more clear to me that silence isn't an emptiness. It isn't so much an IT as a THOU. Let's see if we can deepen our own life of prayer by moving beyond thinking that silence is an emptiness, a backdrop or a condition, into thinking and actually experiencing silence as a mode of relationship with the infinitely present Beloved.

~ Cynthia Bourgeault

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Come away from the din. Come away to the quiet fields, over which the great sky stretches, and where, between us and the stars, there lies but silence; and there, in the stillness let us listen to the voice that is speaking within us.

~ Jerome K. Jerome



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I gather this garment
Of silence about me,
Stillness that used to be
Threatening, its needles
Of fear lurking,
Probing wounds of my past scars to my psyche.
Now in the hands of Love
These needles have knitted
A silence so beautiful
That nothing
Can hurt. I draw skeins
Of silence with this healing garment about me,
As its stitches permeate
The crevices of my soul
Whispering, Peace.
Be still—and know:
Now all that would harm you
Is knitted to warm you.

The more we live with people in a community, the more we must look to ourselves and regard the beam in our own eyes. The more we live with a babbling crowd, the more we must practice silence. “For every idle word we speak, we will be judged.”

~ Dorothy Day

Intelligent silence is the mother of prayer, freedom from bondage, custodian of zeal, a guard on our thoughts, a watch on our fears, a friend of tears, a recollection of death, a concern without judgment, a foe of license, a companion of stillness, the opponent of dogmatism, a growth of knowledge, a hand to shape contemplation, hidden progress, the secret journey toward the Light. The lover of silence draws closer to God (by whatever Names).

~ from THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT by St. John Clemacius

The present state of the world and the whole of life is diseased. If I were a doctor and my advice asked, I should reply, “Create silence. Bring people to silence. The word of God cannot be heard in the noisy world of today. Therefore, create silence.”

~ Soren Keirkegaard

The trees, the flowers, the plants grow in silence. The stars, the sun, the moon move in silence. Silence gives us a new perspective.

~ Mother Teresa

It is strange how much we resist the inherent peace and quiet that is always possible. Perhaps this is because resting in simple presence is so foreign to a lifelong habit of mental complication, and we may have confused complication with a sense of aliveness. We may assume that having no particular mental project would result in boredom. Or we may be overwhelmed by how vast and free life suddenly feels when our minds are not on the hunt.

~ from PASSIONATE PRESENCE by Catherine Ingram

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 GHAGAVAD GITA

We need to recover an oasis of silence within the rhyme and reason of our active life, for it is in silence that we meet God face to face.

~ Max Picard