

Friends of Silence

Vol. XXXIII, No. 9

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October 2020

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

Dear Friends ~ What does it mean to be a Friend of Silence? Our practice must not just be in the artificial conditions of a morning quiet time. We must find a way of working in the noisy conditions of our life. When the clamor and chaos of our ordinary life overtake us, if our friendship with Silence is strong enough, we will find a way to stop and be still -- still enough that the noise does not see us, silent enough that we can find a way back to ourselves. The noise of our life need not be an obstacle to our presence. When Silence finds a home in our body, we can come back to our own inner sensation of “I am” even when everything around us and within us is loud and falling apart. Night and day, noise and silence are both alike to the One in whom we live and move and have our being. ~Bob



When a person is poised in all three centers (mind, heart, and body), balanced and alertly there, a shift happens in consciousness. Rather than being trapped in our usual mind, with its well-formed rut tracks of issues and agendas and ways of thinking, we seem to come from a deeper, steadier, and quieter place. We are present, in the words of Wisdom tradition, fully occupying the now in which we find ourselves.



This state of presence is extraordinarily important to know and taste in oneself. For sacred tradition is emphatic in its insistence that real Wisdom can be given and received only in a state of presence, with all three centers of our being engaged and awake. Anything less is known in the tradition as "sleep" and results in an immediate loss of receptivity to higher meaning. To return to that favorite Wisdom metaphor, it is like the disciple Peter suddenly sinking beneath the surface of the waters.

~ Cynthia Bourgeault from *THE WISDOM WAY OF KNOWING*

Everything in life that we really accept undergoes a change. So suffering becomes love. This is the mystery. This is what I must do.

~ Katherine Mansfield from *THE JOURNAL OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD*

Stop measuring days by degree of productivity and start experiencing them by degree of presence.

~ Alan Watts from *THE WISDOM OF INSECURITY*

The most radical thing any of us can do at this time is to be fully present to what is happening in the world.

~ Joanna Macy

One of the first conscious efforts you can make after you have observed some wrong work or negative I in you is the practice of inner stop. It means to become absolutely still within yourself. You are not trying to stop your thoughts. Stopping all thoughts are not possible. But you can hold yourself inviolate against any particular thought that wishes to grab your attention by being entirely motionless inside. It has nothing to do with stopping the I itself. I's will continue to move in and out of your awareness but in your stillness, you have become invisible to them like a rabbit that freezes when it senses a predator. You notice an encroaching negative I or negative state and instead of trying to banish it you become silent and still inside yourself and therefore are invisible to it. You don't talk to it or contend with it in any way. You simply stay still within yourself which will give you the time to proceed to the next movement. Practicing inner stop gives you the opportunity to decide the best course of action.

~ Rebecca Nottingham from *THE WORK: ESOTERICISM AND CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY*

When we live superficially ... we are always outside ourselves, never quite 'with' ourselves, always divided and pulled in many directions ... we find ourselves doing many things that we do not really want to do, saying things we do not really mean, needing things we do not really need, exhausting ourselves for what we secretly realize to be worthless and without meaning in our lives.

~ Thomas Merton from *LOVE AND LIVING*



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Blessing in the Chaos

To all that is chaotic in you,
let there come silence.

Let there be a calming of the clamoring,
a stilling of the voices
that have laid their claim on you,
that have made their home in you

that go with you even to the holy places
but will not let you rest,
will not let you hear your life with wholeness.

~ Jan Richardson from

THE CURE FOR SORROW



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Feelings like disappointment, embarrassment, irritation, resentment, anger, jealousy, and fear, instead of being bad news, are actually very clear moments that teach us where it is that we're holding back. They teach us to perk up and lean in when we feel we'd rather collapse and back away. They're like messengers that show us, with terrifying clarity, exactly where we're stuck. This very moment is the perfect teacher, and, lucky for us, it's with us wherever we are ... The greatest obstacle to connecting with our joy is resentment.

~ Pema Chödrön from *WHEN THINGS FALL APART*

We have subtle subconscious faculties we are not using. In addition to the limited analytic intellect is a vast realm of mind that includes psychic and extrasensory abilities; intuition; wisdom; a sense of unity; aesthetic, qualitative, and creative capacities; and image-forming and symbolic capacities. Though these faculties are many, we give them a single name with some justification because they are operating best when they are in concert. They comprise a mind, moreover, in spontaneous connection to the cosmic mind. This total mind we call "heart".

Presence signifies the quality of consciously being here. It is the activation of a higher level of awareness that allows all our other human functions - such as thought, feeling, and action - to be known, developed, and harmonized. Presence is the way in which we occupy space, as well as how we flow and move. It shapes our self-image and emotional tone. It determines the degree of our alertness, openness, and warmth. Presence decides whether we leak and scatter our energy or embody and direct it.

~ Kabir Helminski from *LIVING PRESENCE*

It is important that awake people be awake. The darkness around us is deep.
~ William Stafford from "A Ritual to Read to Each Other" in *THE WAY IT IS*

I will also tell you a secret. We have to will one another: this is the beginning of conscious love.

~ Maurice Nicoll from

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMENTARIES ON THE WORKS OF GURDJIEFF AND OUSPENSKI

In order to wish to be present, I must see that I am asleep. "I" am not here. I am enclosed in a circle of petty interests and avidity in which my "I" is lost. And it will remain lost unless I can relate to something higher.

I need to understand that by myself, without a relation with something higher, I am nothing.

I can escape only if I feel my absolute nothingness and begin to feel the need for help. I must feel the need to relate myself to something higher, to open to another quality.

~ Jeanne de Salzmann from *THE REALITY OF BEING*

May God break my heart so
deeply the whole world falls in.

~ Mother Teresa

Being is what you can bear.

~ Sofia Grigorievna Ouspensky