

Friends of Silence

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December 2020

"Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?"

Dear Friends ~ Advent themes swirl in my mind, each an Advent wreath candle: Hope, Faith, Joy, Peace. Regardless of location, languages, ethnicities, or skin tones we humans celebrate these age-old notions in diverse ways. Yet we know their challenging opposites: Hate, Fear, Despair, and Conflict haunt us.

In the Christian Advent story, young, pregnant Mary and her husband travel to fulfill a census requirement. Although angels reassured her, I can't help but feel Mary's fear on this long journey, realizing her baby is coming in a strange place, sharing "emergency housing" with barnyard animals. Yet Mary maintains hope. Her joy spreads to shepherds and kings. Mary's faith proclaims all will be well. Her tiny child comes heralding peace.

Despite fears of Covid, worries about the world, wildfires, and violence, we recently traveled from Washington, D.C. to Washington state to care for our toddler grandson while Mama and Papa birthed a baby brother, an act of hope in our own unsettled times. This December letter is birthed in this milieu reflecting the Yin and Yang of hope and despair, joy and worry in the welcome of babies, and the unfolding of the winter season. As celebrations resound and the year's triumphs and travails fade into the New Unknown, what will be birthed in 2021 in each of us and in our world? How will we play midwife to Hope, Faith, Joy, and Peace? ~ Mary Ann



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May our slowing down this Advent be our gentle protest against the violence of our rushing world. May our slowing down give quiet, steady witness to the values of attentiveness, carefulness, patience, receptivity, stillness. May our slowing down enable us to make real and meaningful connections with people, nature, work, art, and (most importantly) with God.

~ Melannie Svoboda, SND
in her blog "Sunflower Seeds", November 28, 2016

My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

~ John 14:22

Surely the holy one is not deaf.
He hears the delicate bells that ring
On the feet of an insect as it walks.

~ Kabir in *THE SONGS OF KABIR*, translated by Rabindranath Tagore

Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air...

Hope spreads around the earth, brightening all things,
Even hate, which crouches breeding in dark corridors...

We beckon this good season to wait awhile with us.
We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come.
Peace.
We, the Jew and the Jainist, the Catholic and the Confucian,
Implore you to stay awhile with us.

~ Maya Angelou, excerpt from "Amazing Peace"



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In our secret yearnings
we wait for your coming,
and in our grinding despair
we doubt that you will...

Give us the grace and the impatience
to wait for your coming to the bottom of our toes,
to the edges of our fingertips.
We do not want our several worlds to end.
Come in your power
and come in your weakness
in any case
and make all things new.

~Walter Brueggemann in
AWED TO HEAVEN,
ROOTED IN EARTH

God is so free and so marvelous {doing} wonders where people
despair... tak{ing} what is little and lowly and mak{ing} it
marvelous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God
loves the lowly... God marches right in {and} chooses people
as... instruments and performs... wonders where one would least
expect them.

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *GOD IS IN THE MANGER*

Jesus came to us as a child so that we might come to understand
not only that nothing we do is insignificant, but that every small
thing we do has within it the power to change the world.

~ Joan Chittister, OSB in *BECOMING FULLY HUMAN*



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**Peace is inside all of us.
We just need to share it.**

~ *Jacoba Barber-Rozema, age 10*

Remember it's time for justice and peace to kiss and truth and kindness to embrace.
Remember it's time for us to turn and face each other, ourselves, and God again.
Remember it's time to hasten that day!...

Hope is catching and it is loose in the land, set loose by words and impassioned belief that
God is paying attention to what is going on in history, and that God has plans,
as [God] always has for those ... made to live in peace...

~ *Megan McKenna in ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, AND EPIPHANY*



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The proper response, as Hanukkah teaches,
is not to curse the darkness but to light a candle.

~ *Irving Greenberg in THE JEWISH WAY*

All that is necessary
To make this world a better place
To live is to love as
Christ loves, as Buddha loved.

~ *Isadora Duncan*

We shout with glorious tongues the coming of hope...
To celebrate the Promise of Peace.

~ *Maya Angelou, excerpt from "Amazing Peace"*



BLESSINGS of
joy and peace!
May the Promise
of this season
find a home in
your heart!

~ Nan Merrill, 1992