

# Friends of Silence

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May 2022

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

Dear Friends ~ Last month Bob referenced the "4am Club". I am a card-carrying member of the club, as you are, as we all are in these sleepless nights and dark days. Yet Jackie's poem of welcome to the club did not end in loneliness, but with the warmth of being held and the revelation of "unfathomable love". This is resilience, the tenacity that comes from experiencing irrefutable evidence that our present reality is not all there is.

I have a friend who when facing what is hard and the unmovable recalls as a child reading C.S. Lewis's evocative tale of Aslan and the Witch of Narnia. The Lion has given his life in exchange for a traitorous boy, and the Witch gloats because she knows that nothing can overturn the Law and the Deep Magic from the dawn of Time. But the next morning, the grieving girls who have come to retrieve the carcass find a very much alive Aslan who explains, "...though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still ..."

My friends, we need a fierce dose of the magic that is deeper still. For the evidence that we are eternally undergirded by Loving Presence and a Vast, Cosmic Mystery, I turn to the penetrating gaze of the poets, pilgrims, seekers, and storytellers who sing of all that is unseen, who illumine a myriad of other ways of knowing, who celebrate the excruciating joy that can be found under the hard surface of things. May you be nourished by what is offered here and drenched with resilience! ~ Lindsay



We would like to thank you, our amazing Friends of Silence, for supporting the resilience of our humble ministry. In February we made an additional appeal so that we could continue to send the Letter in these difficult times. Your response was generous, heartfelt, and astonishing. We are deeply grateful.

Let us sing to the Creator of the cosmos,  
to the divine power of love!  
When we look at the wondrous display  
of the heavens,  
at the Earth with its infinite  
variety of life,  
Who are we that You love us, that You  
rejoice in our being;

that You trust us to care for creation  
in all its splendor,  
inviting us to become co-creators  
with You?  
Let us celebrate the mystery of life!  
Let us commit our lives to  
the Divine Plan!

~ Nan C. Merrill in *MEDITATIONS AND MANDALAS*

**Trees are an invitation to  
think about time and to  
travel in it the way they do,  
by standing still and reaching  
out and down.**

~ Rebecca Solnit in *ORWELL'S  
ROSES*



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If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate.

Give in to it.

There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be.

We are not wise, and not very often kind.

And much can never be redeemed.

Still, life has some possibility left.

Perhaps this is its way of fighting back,

that sometimes something happens better than all the riches or power in the world.

It could be anything,

but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins.

Anyway, that's often the case.

Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty.

Joy is not made to be a crumb.

~ Mary Oliver, "Don't Hesitate," in *SWAN: POEMS AND PROSE POEMS*

Be helpless, dumbfounded,  
Unable to say yes or no.  
Then a stretcher will come from grace  
to gather us up.

So let us rather not be sure of anything ...  
Then miraculous beings come running to help.  
Crazed, lying in a zero circle, mute,  
We shall be saying finally,  
With tremendous eloquence,  
Lead us.

When we have totally surrendered to that beauty,  
We shall be a mighty kindness.  
~ Rumi from "The Zero Circle"

Although the wind  
blows terribly here,  
the moonlight also leaks  
between the roof planks  
of this ruined house.

~ Izumi Shikibu from "Although the wind...",  
translated by Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Aratani,  
in *THE INK DARK MOON*



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The universe makes a sound — is a sound. In the core of this sound  
there's a silence, a silence that creates that sound, which is not its  
opposite, but its inseparable soul... Silence is a flower, it opens up,  
dilates, extends its texture, can grow, mutate... It can watch other  
flowers grow and become what they are.

~ Etel Adnan in *SHIFTING THE SILENCE*

More and more I have come to admire resilience.  
Not the simple resistance of a pillow, whose foam  
returns over and over to the same shape, but the sinuous  
tenacity of a tree: finding the light newly blocked on one side,  
it turns in another. A blind intelligence, true.  
But out of such persistence arose turtles, rivers,  
mitochondria, figs — all this resinous, unretractable earth.

~ Jane Hirshfield from "Optimism" in *GIVEN SUGAR, GIVEN SALT: POEMS*

Straight up away from this road,  
Away from the fitted particles of frost  
Coating the hull of each chick pea,  
And the stiff archer bug making its way  
In the morning dark, toe hair by toe hair,  
Up the stem of the trillium,  
Straight up through the sky above this road right now,  
The galaxies of the Cygnus A cluster  
Are colliding with each other in a massive swarm  
Of interpenetrating and exploding catastrophes.  
I try to remember that.

And even in the gold and purple pretense  
Of evening, I make myself remember  
That it would take 40,000 years full of gathering  
Into leaf and dropping, full of pulp splitting  
And the hard wrinkling of seed, of the rising up  
Of wood fibers and the disintegration of forests,  
Of this lake disappearing completely in the bodies  
Of toad slush and duckweed rock,  
40,000 years and the fastest thing we own,  
To reach the one star nearest to us.

And when you speak to me like this,  
I try to remember that the wood and cement walls  
Of this room are being swept away now,  
Molecule by molecule, in a slow and steady wind,  
And nothing at all separates our bodies  
From the vast emptiness expanding, and I know  
We are sitting in our chairs  
Discoursing in the middle of the blackness of space.  
And when you look at me  
I try to recall that at this moment  
Somewhere millions of miles beyond the dimness  
Of the sun, the comet Biela, speeding  
In its rocks and ices, is just beginning to enter  
The widest arc of its elliptical turn.

~ Pattiann Rogers, "Achieving Perspective"  
in *THE GRAND ARRAY*

My heart is moved by all I cannot save: So much has been destroyed. I have to cast my lot with those who age after age, perversely,  
with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.

~ Adrienne Rich in *DREAM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE*

We live in a moment of grace. Through the hedges of our divisions we are beginning to glimpse again the beauty of life's oneness.  
We are beginning to hear...the essential harmony that lies at the heart of the universe. And we are beginning to understand...that  
we will be well to the extent that we move back into relationship with one another, whether as individuals and families or as nations  
and species. The time is right. The time is desperately right.

~ John Philip Newell in *A NEW HARMONY*

It began in mystery, and it will end in mystery, but what a savage and beautiful country lies in between.

~ Diane Ackerman in *A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE SENSES*

The Burren is an extraordinary—and strange—place. Miles and miles of hills are covered  
in limestone, like the paving of some old gods...Here, wildflowers grow, sheep pick their  
way through, grasses wave, and stone walls are built by locals...To be in the Burren is to  
bear witness to the unexpected ways that the particularity of place opens you to the  
world.

~ Pdraig O'Tuama in "The Pause" e-newsletter

**The conclusion is always the same:  
love is the most powerful  
and still the most unknown  
energy of the world.**

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



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