

# Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ The crisp unfolding of a new calendar, stiff from unuse, tacked to the waiting door. The whiff of fresh paper opening into the morning rays piercing the study window—a new year bathed in light. We are creatures who need



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light to see the way we do, to move boldly forward and around pitfalls. Light is linked in our awareness with the assurance of visibility and the thrill of creativity. For this we justifiably label it good and imagine Divinity crowned with it. But what if Light was beyond good? What if Light was really about clarity, recognition, being essentially seen and radically loved? Wouldn't that ignite our inner fire and forge us anew? In that crucible would we not be burnished to glow like lanterns in the dark? Dear Friends, in this new year may each of you come to see and know your belovedness more clearly, and may you shine. ~ Lindsay



When you turn within you think you see a light. What you think is the light that you see in the inner world is the light that sees, not the light that can be seen. This is a different kind of light, not the kind of light that can be radiated from a source. This is the all-pervading light. Think of yourself as that light, then your aura will burn more brightly.

~ Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan; read more in *AWAKENING: A SUFI EXPERIENCE*

At the mystical heart of each of the Abrahamic faiths lie teachings about the transformational power of fire and the identification of the Holy One with light. In Judaism, the Shekinah—the indwelling feminine presence of God—took the form of a pillar of fire at night to lead the Israelites through the desert. In the Christian tradition, God revealed Himself (sometimes as Herself) to the 12th century visionary, Hildegard of Bingen, as The Living Light. In the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas, Christ says that he is “the light that is above them all.” In Sufi teaching the highest spiritual state is fana, the annihilation of the separate self in the fire of Divine Love, so that lover and Beloved become One Love.... May we let ourselves down into the arms of fire and allow it to melt the armor of our hearts. The excruciating fire of our loneliness and our fear of intimacy. The sweet fire of our longing for union with the Beloved. The purifying fire of radical unknowingness, which all the great mystics assure us is the beginning of knowing God.

~ Mirabai Starr from the essay “Lighting the Darkness” on *THE INTERFAITH OBSERVER* (digital publication)



Low Houck Bauer

**if each day falls  
inside each night  
there exists a well  
where clarity is imprisoned.**

**we need to sit on the rim  
of the well of darkness  
and fish for fallen light  
with patience.**

~ Pablo Neruda, “Seeking Clarity”  
in *THE POETRY OF PABLO NERUDA*

**The shadows of this world will say—  
There’s no hope why try anyway?  
But every kindness large or slight—  
shifts the balance toward the Light...  
When justice seems in short supply,  
lean in toward the Light.**

~ Carrie Newcomer  
from the song “Lean in Toward the Light”

Blessed are you	the brightness blazes—
who bear the light	your heart
in unbearable times,	a chapel,
who testify	an altar where
to its endurance	in the deepest night
amid the unendurable,	can be seen
who bear witness	the fire that
to its persistence	shines forth in you
when everything seems	in unaccountable faith
in shadow	in stubborn hope
and grief.	in love that illumines
Blessed are you	every broken thing
in whom	it finds.
the light lives,	
in whom	

~Jan Richardson in *CIRCLE OF GRACE*



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**My friends, do not lose heart...For years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement...To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these—to be fierce and to show mercy toward others; both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity...Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it.**

~ Clarissa Pinkola Estes in *DO NOT LOSE HEART*

When her doctor took her bandages off and led her into the garden, the girl who was no longer blind saw “the tree with the lights in it.” It was for this tree I searched through the peach orchards of summer, in the forests of fall and down winter and spring for years. Then one day I was walking along Tinker Creek thinking of nothing at all and I saw the tree with the lights in it. I saw the backyard cedar where the mourning doves roost charged and transfigured, each cell buzzing with flame. I stood on the grass with the lights in it, grass that was wholly fire, utterly focused and utterly dreamed. It was less like seeing than like being for the first time seen, knocked breathless by a powerful glance. The flood of fire abated, but I’m still spending that power. Gradually the lights went out in the cedar, the colors died, the cells un-flamed and disappeared. I was still ringing. I had been my whole life a bell, and never knew it until at that moment I was lifted and struck. I have since only very rarely seen the tree with the lights in it. The vision comes and goes, mostly goes, but I live for it, for the moment when the mountains open and a new light roars in spate through the crack, and the mountains slam.

~ Annie Dillard in *PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK*

**“Make of yourself a light,”  
said the Buddha,  
before he died.  
I think of this every morning  
as the east begins  
to tear off its many clouds  
of darkness....  
The light burns upward,  
it thickens and settles over the fields...  
Even before the sun itself  
hangs, disattached, in the blue air,  
I am touched everywhere  
by its ocean of yellow waves...  
And then I feel the sun itself  
as it blazes over the hills,  
like a million flowers on fire—  
clearly I’m not needed,  
yet I feel myself turning  
into something of inexplicable value...**

~ Mary Oliver, excerpts from  
“The Buddha’s Last Instruction” in *HOUSE OF LIGHT*

The canyon bleeds, then deepens  
and darkens ...  
A sliver of white moon in the east.  
Thin Light spills into the gorge  
and the river sings an ancient song.  
At the edge of shadow, night:  
dark stone, pine scent, water,  
cascading Light.

~ David Lee in *SO QUIETLY THE EARTH*



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Throughout my whole life, during every minute of it, the world has been gradually lighting up and blazing before my eyes until it has come to surround me, entirely lit up from within.

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in *THE HEART OF THE MATTER*

But, for me, winter has an even greater gift to give. It comes when the sky is clear, the sun brilliant, the trees bare, and the first snow yet to come. It is the gift of utter clarity. In winter, one can walk into woods that had been opaque with summer growth only a few months earlier and see the trees clearly singly and together, and see the ground that they are rooted in.

~ Parker Palmer in *SEASONS*

There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.

~ Barry Lopez in *ARCTIC DREAMS*

Before the restoration, it was the colors I watched, blue, red, yellow, green, pink; the architecture, the meadow, the hedges, the water. Now, what I see is light. White light. Color has been absorbed into form; Form is in the service of surprise. It is the light, the throbbing illumination, glowing on the horizon, rippling in the waters, blowing through the grasses, that touches my lips. Something has been set in motion.

~ Terry Tempest Williams in *LEAP*