

# Friends of Silence

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



Dear Friends ~ I want to stride exuberantly into this new year “full of things that have never been” (Rilke). I’m customarily inclined to seek out those quiet, inward “cracks of silence where breath is connected to spirit” (Karyn Dedar). I need, we all need, silence, as Nan says, “for the Word to be heard.” *And* on a crisp January morn when the air tingles, the tree limbs crack, and the sun slices sharp shadows on the landscape, an invigoration seizes me. I want to stomp around and inhale and shout and gaze about eagerly. I want to move my muscles, sinews, and bones. After all, we are fully embodied human creatures, wonderfully knit together in our mothers’ wombs. As the poet David Whyte says, “To be human is to become visible, while carrying what is hidden as a gift to others.” Our physical senses open holy gates, and the world pours in. Meanwhile, our body knows things, remembers what our mind

cannot, expresses what our words muffle. Honestly, the scattering of quotes in this Letter is mere surface dust on the immense, multifaceted experience of embodied life and the thousands of ways we humans have of grappling with and celebrating our incarnate selfhoods. In 1939, in the midst of the ominous dark of pre-war Europe, Bertolt Brecht, exiled from his native Germany, asked “In the dark times, will there be singing?” and in the same breath, answered his own question, “Yes, there will be singing about the dark times.” So, friends, let’s claim what we are, bearers of Presence enshrined in the braided body-soul that is our birthright. Stand up. Make big shadows. Stride boldly, sing defiantly, dance! ~ Lindsay



We are all dancers. We use movement to express ourselves—our hunger, pains, angers, joys, confusions, fears—long before we use words, and we understand the meanings of movements long before we understand those of words.

~ Franklin Stevens. Read more in *PROCESS IN THE ARTS THERAPIES*

In Celtic wisdom the sacred is as present on earth as it is in heaven, as immanent as it is transcendent, as human as it is divine, as physical as it is spiritual. The sacred can be breathed in, tasted, touched, heard, and seen as much in the body of the earth and the body of another living being as in the body of religion. It is the true essence of all life.

~ John Philip Newell in *SACRED EARTH, SACRED SOUL*

**The fullness of joy is to behold God in all.**

~ Julian of Norwich

Gestures, actions, and facial expressions may be less precise than the spoken word, but they are altogether a more reliable form of communication. Reading to [the wild] Fox mattered because of pauses and eye contact. Our actions, not our words, built our trust in each other,



and we based our relationship on shared activities, not dialogue. In fact, I was more relaxed communicating to Fox than I would have been with a person. Consider how difficult it is to communicate when our tongues send us in one direction and our feet take us in another.

~ Catherine Raven in *FOX AND I*



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God speaks to each of us as he makes us,  
then walks with us silently out of the night.

These are the words we dimly hear:

You, sent out beyond your recall,

Go to the limits of your longing.

Embody me.

Flare up like flame

And make big shadows I can move in.

~ Rainer Maria Rilke, “Let Everything Happen” in

*RILKE’S BOOK OF HOURS: LOVE POEMS TO GOD*

My work is loving the world.

Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird....

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?

Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect? Let me

Keep my mind on what matters,

which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be

astonished....

which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart

and these body clothes,

a mouth with which to give shouts of joy...

~ Mary Oliver, excerpts from "Messenger" in THIRST



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**Movement never lies.  
It is a barometer  
telling the state of the soul's weather  
to all who can read it.**

~ Martha Graham in "An Athlete of God" (essay)

Christianity arrives in a Platonic landscape where the body is a husk around a soul, imperfect and soon to be shrugged off. For some pagans, the Christian notion of a resurrected body was distinctly odd, especially as there was no possibility of floating off somewhere more etheric. In the next life you still had a body, just not that one that slowly became dust... The body is not a tomb, it's a pleasure, and it goes where we go because we're completely bound up with it.

~ Martin Shaw in "A God with a Dog in the Race" (essay)

**Sing a joy-filled song praising  
The Blessed One..  
Be glad in the Creator,  
Rejoice in Love Divine!**

**Praise the Divine Lover with dancing,  
with melodies and voice!  
For the Beloved dwells within,  
journeying with us through  
all our lives...**

~ Nan Merrill from her interpretation of "Psalm 149"  
in PSALMS FOR PRAYING



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In many spiritual traditions of the world, the body is viewed with fear and suspicion, considered to be the seat of desire and at best a dumb beast that must be trained and brought into submission to the personal will. But what is missed here—and it is of crucial importance—is that the moving center also carries unique perceptive gifts, the most important of which is the capacity to understand the language of faith encoded in sacred gesture.

~ Cynthia Bourgeault in THE WISDOM WAY OF KNOWING



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Please come home. Please come home.

Find the place where your feet know where to walk

And follow your own trail home.

Please come home. Please come home into your  
own body,

Your own vessel, your own earth....

And thank you touch of eyes and ears and skin,

Touch of love for welcoming us.

May we wake up and remember who we truly are...

~ Jane Hooper, excerpts from "Please Come Home"