

# Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ For the past month, my daily mantra and aim has been: Stay in the river. Let the current take me where it will.

This sounds relaxing, but it takes courage to trust that wherever the river flows, it eventually finds the ocean. It requires us to loosen our grip on what we think we know and allow ourselves to be taken, even cracked open. The good news is that in this releasing and opening there is also discovery: of the astonishing presence of grace already moving through our lives, of the endless becoming and rebecoming that courses beneath all things.

The voices gathered here approach that mystery from many different directions, assuring us that we are not alone as we move downstream. It is June, after all, the beginning of summer, when all that has waited in quiet through the dark months and was seeded in springtime promise, emerges in abundance: a communal act born of connection, relationship, and reciprocity.

May these poems and words encourage you to stay in the river, and may you be refreshed in its flow. ~ Bob

I know, you never intended to be in this world.  
But you're in it all the same.

So why not get started immediately.

I mean, belonging to it.

There is so much to admire, to weep over.

And to write music or poems about.

Bless the feet that take you to and fro.

Bless the eyes and the listening ears.

Bless the tongue, the marvel of taste.

Bless touching.

You could live a hundred years, it's happened.

Or not.

I am speaking from the fortunate platform  
of many years,

none of which, I think, I ever wasted.

Do you need a prod?

Do you need a little darkness to get you going?

Let me be as urgent as a knife, then,

and remind you of Keats,

so single of purpose and thinking, for a while,

he had a lifetime.

~ Mary Oliver, "The Fourth Sign of the Zodiac (Part 3),"  
in *BLUE HORSES: POEMS*



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*May you learn to welcome both joy and sorrow as guests bearing gifts.*

*May you cherish all voices within you and know  
each holds a place for your wholeness*

*May you never hide from wonder and  
curiosity's enlivening dance within you*

*May you feel the love of your ancestors  
watching over you and let your heart seek their guidance*

*May you awaken to ever widening circles of Truth*

*May you know the deep interconnection of all  
beings and hold reverence for the planet that sustains you*

*May you listen to the shy voice of soul that can  
lead you into your deepest calling*

*May your ability to hold compassion keep  
expanding so that love guides your way*

~ Glenn Siegel, "Blessing," in *HOWLING WITH GRATITUDE AND GRIEF*

Here is a summertime truth: abundance is a communal act, the joint creation of an incredibly complex ecology in which each part functions on behalf of the whole and, in return, is sustained by the whole. Community not only creates abundance — community is abundance. If we could learn that equation from the world of nature, the human world might be transformed.

Summer is the season when all the promissory notes of autumn and winter and spring come due, and each year the debts are repaid with compound interest. In summer it is hard to remember that we had ever doubted the natural process, had ever ceded death the last word, had ever lost faith in the powers of new life. Summer is a reminder that our faith is not nearly as strong as the things we profess to have faith in — a reminder that, for this single season at least, we might cease our anxious machinations and give ourselves to the abiding and abundant grace of our common life.

~ Parker Palmer from "Summer" in the welcome materials for *SEASONS: A CENTER FOR RENEWAL* by the Fetzer Institute

*"She's having a total breakdown,"  
one put together  
and very self-satisfied seed  
with no cracks in it  
whispered to another  
about a third seed who had begun  
to germinate.*

*"She's completely falling apart—  
her life is a mess!"*

*They gazed superiorly  
at the smooth, intact facade  
of their shells  
so perfectly upholding  
expectations of the status quo.  
Clearly, compared to that wild,  
sprouting seed  
disrupting the peace,  
they were doing something right...right?*

*But now and then,  
they secretly looked up  
with longing at the tall-stemmed,  
bravely opened flower  
wondering if there might be  
more to themselves.*

*~ Chelan Harkin, "Total Breakdown,"  
in WILD GRACE: POEMS*

To arrive where you are,  
to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way  
wherein there is no ecstasy.

In order to arrive at  
what you do not know  
You must go by a way  
which is the way of ignorance.

In order to possess  
what you do not possess  
You must go by the way  
of dispossession.

In order to arrive  
at what you are not

You must go by the way  
in which you are not.

And what you do not know  
is the only thing you know

And what you own

is what you do not own

And where you are is where you are not.

*~ T. S. Eliot from "East Coker" in FOUR QUARTETS*

Please try to go  
to hell frequently  
because you will  
find the light there

yes yes — please  
try to kiss the ideas  
that you find there  
yes yes — please

try to get that  
it is the center  
of the universe  
yes yes — please

try to help yourself  
by kissing the hot hot  
hot life that is born  
there yes yes — please

try to yell in hell  
yes yes — please  
try to free yourself  
by pouring yourself  
into the gutter all  
guttural guttural yell  
yes yes yes — please  
try to get that you  
become the being  
that you came there  
to be yes yes — please  
try to go to the great

great great fire that you  
created because you  
become the light  
that the fire makes

inside of you  
yes yes — please  
try to kiss yourself  
for going there

yes yes — please  
get that you are  
reborn there  
yes yes — please

begin your day

*~ Hannah Emerson,  
"Center of the Universe," in  
THE KISSING OF KISSING*

... within [us] is the soul of the whole; the  
wise silence; the universal beauty, to which  
every part and particle is equally related...  
When it breathes through [our] intellect, it  
is genius; when it breathes through [our]  
will, it is virtue; when it flows through [our]  
affection, it is love.

*~ Ralph Waldo Emerson  
from "The Over-Soul" in ESSAYS*

As swimmers dare  
to lie face to the sky  
and water bears them,  
as hawks rest upon air  
and air sustains them,  
so would I learn to attain  
freefall, and float  
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,  
knowing no effort earns  
that all-surrounding grace.

*~ Denise Levertov, "The Avowal,"  
in OBLIQUE PRAYERS*



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*Even now, I am becoming  
wind, something less flesh, more  
movement, more current, less  
here, more everywhere. Though  
the moment I think I know this truth,  
the knowing re-solidifies me,  
makes me into clay that pretends it is wind.  
But becoming clay again, I am destined  
to crumble, disintegrate, until  
I am dust and once again one  
with the wind. How to trust anything  
then, except this infinite becoming and  
rebecoming—and whatever  
it is that is alive inside it all.  
That. I put my faith in that.*

*~ Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer, "Faith,"  
from her blog A HUNDRED FALLING VEILS*