

■ Friends of Silence ■

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

All art for this issue by
Linda DeGraf © 2020



Dear Friends ~ Many years ago, I asked Fr. Aiden, the abbot at St. Anselm's Benedictine Monastery in Washington D.C., "What do you do at the monastery?" Aiden's reply has stayed with me: "We fall and get up. We fall and get up. We fall and get up again." That has also been my experience with trying to establish a daily practice of "centering prayer." For many years, silence was NOT a friend to me: it was a daily humiliation of seeing and bearing the dispersion of my own inner being. Daily sitting was like taking a daily bath in the waters of my own inadequacy and inner contradictions. My working definition of "waking up" was seeing my sleep. I may still be the world's worst contemplative, but gradually I began to soften to this lawful falling away from myself and getting back up, not just while sitting on the morning chair, but as I went throughout the day. The falling became fuel for an inner engine that could turn dislike into like, unwillingness into willingness, and resistance to unwanted life events into surrender and acceptance. The Beloved keeps saying: "My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness. When you are weak, then you are strong."

~ Bob



The darkness
and the light
are both alike
to Thee.

Psalms 139



The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell you
Don't go back to sleep!
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep!
People are going back and forth
across the doorsill where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep!

~ Rumi

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 through 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.

~ from *FOUR QUARTETS (East Coker)*, by T. S. Eliot

Why do I flee from you? My days and nights pour
through me like complaints and become a story I
forgot to tell. Help me. Even as I write these words I
am planning to rise from the chair as soon as I finish
this sentence.

~ from *THE KINGDOM OF ORDINARY TIME* by Marie Howe

Clearing

Do not try to serve
the whole world
or do anything grandiose.
Instead, create
a clearing
in the dense forest
of your life
and wait there
patiently,
until the song
that is yours alone to sing
falls into your open cupped hands
and you recognize and greet it.
Only then will you know
how to give yourself
to the world
so worthy of rescue.

~ Martha Postlethwaite

the time I am absent but do not know it. And if I do not discover the way I am taken, I will remain caught in a circle with no way out. To see, to know, becomes the most important aim.

~ from *THE REALITY OF BEING* by Jeanne de Salzmann

At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure

glory of God in us. It is so to speak God's name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely ... I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.

~ from *CONJECTURES OF A GUILTY BYSTANDER*
by Thomas Merton



It may be that when we no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.

~ Wendell Berry in *Standing By Words*

I believe I need to pay attention, when in fact I need to see and know my inattention.

As I am, I cannot keep from being lost in life. This is because I do not believe that I become lost and do not see that I like being taken. I do not know what it means "to be taken."

The first effort is to awake, in order to see ourselves as we are in our sleep. We believe that to awake is to enter into an entirely different life, which will have nothing in common with the one we lead. But, in fact, awaking means, above all, to awake to ourselves as we are, to see and feel our sleep.

Although we could wake up, most of the time we refuse this possibility. We could awake to our own Presence but do not. And when we do, we see that we cannot remain present. I was awake, now I find myself asleep. I was present, and again I am not here. Most of

The Healing Time

Finally on my way to yes
I bump into
all the places
where I said no
to my life

all the untended wounds
the red and purple scars
those hieroglyphs of pain
carved into my skin, my bones,

those coded messages
that send me down
the wrong street
again and again
where I find them
the old wounds
the old misdirections

and I lift them
one by one
close to my heart
and I say
holy
holy.

~ Pesha Joyce Gertler

Poem to Myself

Sink down into the center of each flowering moment.
What if the moment does not flower?

Sink down into the center of the moment.
What if I can't find the center?

Sink down into the moment.
What if the moment is gone?

Sink down.
What if I can't sink down?

Then be still.

The moment will find you.

The center will surround you.

The flower will bloom within you.

~ from *MOVING DAY*, by Rob Soley