

Friends of Silence

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

i.

Dear Friends ~ The chill of autumn rouses something in me that begins to doze in the comfortable consistency of late summer warmth. The sun sets sooner and the air cools considerably. Each nerve on my arm becomes acutely aware of the change; chill bumps peak up as if to say, "What's this now?", "Oh, Hello, Old Friend!", "I am alive, conscious and present on this spinning Earth for the start of another season".

For me, each quarter brings a giddy excitement. The magic and merriment of the altering autumn colors, of the first snowfall, snowdrop and crocus buds, or



Art by B.A.K.

butterflies, or when summer trees begin to mimic those orange butterfly wings once more. Round and round. They are predictable, but they are not everyday. They are consistent, but also passing.

ii.

I received a message from a friend the other day seeking reminders for gratitude and joy amidst the tedium of tiresome tasks.

My first instinct was to encourage; to don a Brother Lawrence habit and share a mostly imagined practice of a continual conversation with the "Lord of all pots and pans and things". What a beautiful way to live, with the choice to infuse any instance with awe and love.

My second instinct was to counter; to stand in the corner of discontentment and cheer on whatever part of her might be

bucking. The overwhelm. The loneliness. The inequality. The unprioritized passions. Frustration, exhaustion, and boredom do not erase gratitude or joy; all can exist at once.



Watercolor by Robin Smalley

iii.

I knew someone who stopped using the word 'but'. Everything was 'and'. It cracked open the hard pericarp of my thinking, revealing a pithy inner chamber. It substituted phrases like, "It was hard, but I did it," with an empowering reminder that one does not preclude the other. "It was hard. I did it." A subtle but meaningful change. Not in spite of the difficulty, which certainty also feels true, but alongside the difficulty; with the difficulty.

Early Autumn reminds me of this "and" mentality. I wake up and put on a sweater only to sweat and remove it moments later. I watch the young growth from my late summer succession planting while pulling old tomato stalks to mark the end of their time. We move about during the day like it is still summer, only to be ushered back inside by an earlier sunset into the more reflective inner work of the incoming season. Each day holds room for it all, just as you and I are a manifestation of the myriad.

We are grateful.

We are overwhelmed.

We are joyful.

We carry deep sorrow.

We are changing.

We are eternal.

We are dying.

We are alive.

~ Katie



Photo by Pranjali Kumar on Unsplash

As leaves fall to the earth and surrender to the soil, may we, too, move our attention from the outer world to the Inner Being. As we move toward a season of stillness, may our path be straight, returning to the Source. Listen. The stillness calls to you.

~ Nan Merrill from the Friends of Silence newsletter,
October 1993 (Vol. VI, No. 9)

The whole world is a series of miracles, but we are so accustomed to them that we call them everyday matters.

~ Hans Christian Andersen from "The Puppet-Show Man"
in PICTURES OF SWEDEN



A religion to be true must include everything from the amoeba to the milky way.

~ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

*I think breakfast is sacred.
Even if you just stand
to watch the tea kettle boil.
Sunlit mornings and creaky steps
with oversized blankets
and soggy eyes
welcome another try at life.
It's dusty and quiet—
just a soul trying to wake up
and a cup of tea.*

~ Sophia Rivera on sophiariverapoetry.com

I remember a friend of mine saying to me, are you happy? And I said, well, I have moments of being happy, but I've stopped trying to be happy because every time I wasn't, I thought I was failing. What I want is to be alive. And every one of these emotions has vitality in them. My grief is vital. My sadness is vital. My anger is vital. Even my fear is vital. And I want to be alive, not happy. You know, I want to feel my own pulse...

~ Francis Weller on *The Great Simplification* with Nate Hagens podcast, March 12, 2025

On every level of life, from housework to heights of prayer, in all judgment and efforts to get things done, hurry and impatience are sure marks of the amateur.

~ Evelyn Underhill in *PRACTICAL MYSTICISM: A LITTLE BOOK FOR NORMAL PEOPLE*

In the Middle Ages, spiritual advisors always warned against a state that had a variety of names but was difficult to describe: inertia, ill pleasure (acedia), nausea, laziness (pigritia), dullness (tarditas). All these terms pointed to a joyless, antimystical condition: an idleness that can be highly busy, a nauseousness with life that has learned the morbid art of seeing only decay and destruction in everything, a laziness of life that makes us too sluggish to look for God's radiance in creation or to make it shine again. Not to be able to cry and to rejoice, to curse and to pray, were regarded at that time as an ill-fortune and disturbance.

~ Dorothee Söelle in *SILENT CRY: MYSTICISM AND RESISTANCE*

If it came down to doing just one thing, I would choose to sit, enjoy life, experience life, the sorrows and whatever else it may bring, and write about it.

~ Dolly Parton from "Songteller: My Life in Lyrics part 1" on dollyparton.substack.com, August 3, 2026

Wendell Berry's formula for a good life and a good community is simple and pleasingly unoriginal. Slow down. Pay attention. Do good work. Love your neighbours. Love your place. Stay in your place. Settle for less, enjoy it more.

~ Paul Kingsnorth in the Introduction to *THE WORLD-ENDING FIRE: THE ESSENTIAL WENDELL BERRY*

I am sitting under a sycamore by Tinker Creek. I am really here, alive on the intricate earth under trees.

~ Annie Dillard in *PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK*