

Holy Ground

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A quarterly reflection on
the contemplative life



LET GO OF ANGER AND LEAVE
RAGE BEHIND.
DON'T GET UPSET. IT ONLY
LEADS TO EVIL.
(PSALM 37)



Do you remember Chicken Little? While walking in the woods, the chick felt an acorn drop onto her silly head, and she believed that the sky was falling. She sets off to inform the king of this horror and on the way picks up some of her friends who believe her story, though they have no evidence of its truth.

Goosey Loosey, Ducky Lucky and Turkey Lurkey follow Chicken Little, cackling and crowing with alarm. Then they meet sly Foxy Loxy, who says he knows the way to the king's castle and

will be happy to escort them there. You know the rest of the story.



Dr Oliver Tearle of Loughborough University summarizes the moral messages:

1) don't form incorrect conclusions from insufficient data; 2) don't stoke fear in others without good cause to do so; and 3) don't take other people's word for things, especially when those other people are making extraordinary claims (which should require extraordinary evidence).

Somewhere torpedoes and bombs are falling from the sky. People face real threats to their well-being on a daily basis. Everywhere we turn we find pain, conflict and outrage, which result in impasse, stalemate, and use of power, force and violence. We see the devastation and the tragedy of our species' failure to find the inner and outer resources to heal our suffering and make peace with each other. We forget that we are inextricably connected to each other and to this creation. When one of us suffers, we all suffer.

Some of us, alarmed, and wringing our hands with Chicken Little and her friends, shout, “We must act! We must do something! We must change this! We must protect ourselves!” However, our reality is not a children’s fable, or is it?

I wonder what would have happened if Chicken Little looked down and saw the acorn that had dropped on her head, now resting in the chicken scratch at her feet? Acorns are a favored treat for fowl.

Or maybe Goosey Loosey said, “Before we go all that way to the King, let’s gather here a bit and think this through. We know how Foxy Loxy is always sniffing around and lurking in the weeds.” Maybe Ducky Lucky said, “I really need to sit on my eggs a bit longer here.” So, they all gathered round to roost with Ducky Lucky, quietly absorbed and still. And lo and behold an acorn dropped from an oak tree and Turkey Lurky said, “Well for heaven’s sake, the sky is not falling, but the acorns are. Let’s have lunch! And he began pecking at the shell of a nut, as the others scratched among the leaves for the tasty acorns. Instead of Foxy Loxy eating them up, the fowl had a feast of their own.

“If we want peace, we have to be peace. Peace is a practice and not a hope,” wrote the friend of Rev. Dr. Martin



Luther King, Jr., Thich Nhat Hanh. Becoming the very peace that we seek to be and share – this transformation in Christ, the Prince of Peace – doesn’t happen overnight. Peace is a gift. We have only to receive it, as it is poured out into our being and our lives together moment by moment.

Jesus gives his inner peace to us. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
(John 14:1; 27 KJV)

But what if I don’t feel this peace of Christ? Make room within you for peace to dwell. Clear away the static. Make accessing your inner peace a priority.



*I think 99 times and I find nothing.
I stop thinking, swim in silence,
and the truth comes to me.*

Albert Einstein

To empty ourselves of our own opinions and desires and turn in silent surrender to Love, to Truth with Us, to our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter opens us up to receive the flow of peace we seek.

Even in the midst of conflict, the clash of swords and chaos, there is a place within us all like a seed, or pearl, or diamond, as Thomas Merton called it. Jesus called this place the Kingdom of God and told us that it is within us. There, right within you is all the peace you will ever need, all the love, compassion, healing, forgiveness, justice, truth, freedom, and joy in abundance.

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, as our daughter or sonship. 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.

Thomas Merton
Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander

Here is both our challenge and our glory: This place of inner stillness *is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will*. This reality within us cannot be contaminated or manipulated. Our own will must be surrendered.

Here we begin to come to terms with the fantasies of our minds and the brutalities of our will. This is our responsibility. "My will is brutal. No way!" you may think. Think again. Does your ego push you around, demand perfection, blame and shame you, create feelings like low self-esteem, envy, jealousy, resentment,



and hatred? We keep pretty busy judging ourselves and others.

Here is the glory. Conflict is where we learn about ourselves and each other. Here possibilities open up. For within conflict is the place where Hope waits. When you feel torn apart with “should I do this or that” you are on the threshold of what I call the juice of the matter. In our weakest moments, when our deepest fears collide with our deepest desires, down here, *where the Spirit meets the bone*, is where resurrection begins.

Indeed, the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before God no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

Hebrews 4: 12-13

That two-edged sword will hurt. As we choose to put down our weapons and our pride, we surrender to the One larger and wiser and far more powerful than ourselves and step out into immense freedom.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO FAITH? —

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

(Hebrews 11:1)

Author and peacemaker, Parker Palmer has described us as functional atheists. Our lives as we live them do not reflect our faith as we proclaim it. We want power and control. Faith wants humility and conviction. We value efficiency over relationships. Our institutions seek certainty and stability. We flail around for an anchor hold, a place to fasten ourselves to in the storm. We are constantly persuaded to look for hope, peace and well-being outside of ourselves – on our phones, in other people, at the mall, in our leaders, in power and possessions.

Inner peace cannot be purchased. Scandalous as it may sound inner peace is free! Many of us profess a belief in a higher power, something greater and wiser and stronger than ourselves, yet over and over we betray our God and our highest end by succumbing to indifference, violence and hate.

It might encourage you to know that Swiss reformed theologian, Karl Barth, also struggled to understand and live with faith.



“God’s thoughts are in us and over us. Yet we must learn to believe, believe that everything depends upon God who stands behind us; we are in God’s hand. The greatest, the best in us is precisely not our private concern but God’s. Ah, if I could only believe it! It need not be complicated. Let the divine that you do recognize, actually be divine for once! Or perhaps you and I like our insecurity and instability compared to the thoughts of God. Perhaps we prefer to place ourselves next to the truth instead of in the truth?”

We must once and for all give up trying to be self-made individuals. God wants to do everything, certainly through us and with us and never without us; but our participation in what God does must naturally originate and rise and grow out of God’s power, not ours. So long as our words do not arise from faith, from our confidence in the power of God, we will remain and be mute. Only faith can speak. But faith can speak.”

*-Watch for the Light, “To Believe”,
Dec13. Plough Publishing House*

COULD WE ALL JUST BE STILL FOR MOMENT?

Mystery speaks in the language of silence that we may discover the peace we long for within ourselves, rather than getting lost in the shifting sands beneath our feet. Why is it so hard to pause, to breathe, to listen and rest? In our word-laden conversations, meetings, conferences, news, schools, governments, and churches there is little or no space for silence – no room for the Spirit to move and flow, no air left for the Spirit to breathe upon us. No time to allow the Spirit to meet the bone.

Being silent has long been difficult for the followers of Jesus. In the seventh century Bishop Isaac of Ninevah noted: “More than all things love silence: it brings you a fruit that tongue cannot describe. In the beginning we have to force ourselves to be silent. But then there is born something that draws us to silence. May God give you an experience of this “something” that is born of silence. If only you practice this, untold light will dawn on you in consequence ... After a while a certain sweetness is born in



the heart of this exercise and the body is drawn almost by force to remain in silence.”

Issac of Nineveh, 7th-century Syriac Christian Bishop

Silence summons and woos us. Over and over, we resist its call: Must produce, no time, too busy, can't settle down, too anxious. Some of us are afraid of silence. We do not want to face things we are denying, the deep grief we carry, or our fear. Yet it is in our silence and stillness when our darkness may rise up to be tended and healed by the light of grace.

Silence sits down outside our doors.
A lonely God grieving for our presence.

You have heard the words:

“I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that did not call on my name. I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good.”

(Isaiah 65: 1-2)

“For thus said the Lord God the Holy One of Israel: ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength. But you refused and said, “No! We will flee on fast horses.’

(Isaiah 30:15-16a)

The word of God is conceived in silence. Mary had enough emptiness and faith to hear and believe the word of the Lord to her. You have felt the yearning for more, for depth, for the embrace of peace and love. You are not a stranger to stillness for it dwells within you.

Faith requires us to be willing to be useless, to dare not to accomplish, not to end the service on time, not get the meeting over as quickly as possible, not to race through our lives. As Barth suggests, break up your love affair with insecurity and instability. *Let the divine you do recognize, actually be divine for once!*

We deprive ourselves of the wordless communion that slowly enters and gathers up a group of people and both deepens and expands us. Here we enter the spaciousness of Christ with us and within us, held as one in the pulsing love of God. Our hearts are softened and a tenderness settles over us. Jesus meets us



in continually renewed immediacy
that is utterly compelling and complete.

God misses us.
Believe. Be still. Be at peace.

Loretta F Ross



SANCTUARY
FUN FACT:
In 1999 Woman's
Day Magazine
featured the
Hermitage in
an article.



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for your generous support of this Wayside
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are open to serve a wide range of people. And
we have a great assortment of the fruits of the
Spirit ready for you.

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*It has brought peace and serenity to me in the chaos
of the Twenty-First Century by regularly reminding
me of the serenity that comes through the stability of
following the teachings and life of Jesus in good
times and difficult times.*

- Ron Cobb

**Do you have a story or experience over the past
35-40 years related to the Sanctuary ministry?
If so we would love to hear from you and share it
with others.**



*Many words exhaust truth.
Keep to the empty center.*

So, we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord for we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7



Holy Ground is published by The Sanctuary Foundation for Prayer.

...the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Revelation 22:2-3

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