

Exploring Our Call in Caring for Creation

ADFP Monthly Email

January 28, 2018



Winter Silence

In the Cave of the Heart

Prepare a centerpiece with a candle and woven fabric

Part 1

Background:

Silence is a feature of the Universe that seems more apparent in winter than in other seasons. The river outside my window is silent in its frozen state. Except for a few hardy specimens, the song birds have disappeared until spring. The leaves are gone from the trees and no longer rustle in the breeze, and when the snow falls it is utterly quiet. The silence of the outer world invites us to make space in our hearts for inner silence. Indeed, we are drawn to the quiet.

On the downside of winter, we creatures of Planet Earth find that we are affected by the diminished amount of sunlight available to us during winter's short days. Whether plant, animal or human we experience a chemical reaction to the lack of light. The plants react most radically, withering away. Many animals respond by slowing down to a crawl while others head for the quiet of caves to rest or hibernate. We humans often feel sluggish, need to rest more, and might like to hibernate until the flowers begin to bud.

However, as a species, bit by bit, we have adjusted our ways of responding to winter in keeping with the emergence of self-reflective consciousness at the center of our being. In an evolutionary sense, we have gone beyond the instinctual responses of other mammals to being able to make choices that *enhance* the unfolding of life at the center.

Yes, like the rest of the creatures who roam the Earth, we must care for ourselves during winter's cold nights and bleak days. However, for us this includes choosing to consciously rest and renew the inner life of spirit even as we rest and renew our bodies.

We might think of winter's silence as a sacred tool that draws us to the quiet depths within where we can meet with the Source of the silence. Our whole being needs the rest found only in quiet.

Setting the scene:

For significant times of prayer and journeys inward, it can be a good idea to set the scene for our opening to the Sacred. In wintertime, the imagery of the dark and quiet cave serves us well for setting the scene, particularly because the cave connects to the pull of interiority. Traditionally, the cave is the place to meet the Holy.

It is likely that our genes hold the memory of our distant ancestors who found refuge and sanctuary in the caves of the Earth. Not only were the caves places of protection and safety from danger and harsh elements, but the caves were places of transformation from one level of development to another. Also, wherever there are caves that were inhabited by early peoples, there is evidence that the people penetrated beyond the entrance chamber to the mysterious and pitch-dark places within the cave system. It is no wonder that the cave has come to symbolize interiority; to go into the cave is to engage the inner journey.

The physical caves may be far away, but we have ready access to cave imagery, especially in winter when refuge images tend to surface within us.

Furthermore, the cave is synonymous with the heart in the spiritual journey; to go to the cave is to attend to what matters to the heart.

Part 2

Symbols: Candle and woven fabric

Light the candle. (You will need the light to explore the spaces within.)

Remember, caves are places of growth and transformation, places to meet God. It is well to note that Jesus was born in and buried in a cave. Liturgically, we are in the time marked at either end by caves.

Reflection:

When you are ready, read the following story told by Michael Meade, the storyteller. * You are the weaver at the center of the story. The story is set in a cave.

The Old People of the tribes tell of a special cave where a woman is weaving the most beautiful garment in the world. She is almost finished, but while she stirs the soup in a great cauldron at the back of the cave a black dog awakens and moves to where she has left the garment on the floor. The dog begins pulling on a loose thread of the beautiful garment. Because each thread is woven to another, pulling on one undoes them all. Soon the beautiful garment is a chaotic mess on the floor of the cave. When the woman returns she sits and looks silently upon the remnants of her once beautiful design. She ignores the presence of the black dog as she stares intently at the tangle of loose threads and distorted designs. Then after a while she picks up a thread and begins again to weave an even more lovely cloak, the most beautiful garment the world has ever seen.

Take time to consider the story. Remember, you are the woman who weaves. In your heart identify with her character. Then, see the questions that follow.

Reflection Questions:

- Why was the cauldron of soup at the back of the cave?
- You, the weaver, did not scold the black dog. Why not?
- Is silence important to your story? Why?
- What enabled you to pick up a thread and begin again?

Part 3

Psalms:

The following psalms adapted by Nan Miller will help you in your journey inward.

Commune with the Heart of your heart

As you rest; be in silence.

Bask in stillness. (4)

O my Beloved, in the morning
You hear my voice;
Throughout the day, I offer myself to You;
I wait for You in silence.
For You are love and You delight in goodness;
all that is of love walks with You. (5)

Commune with the Heart of your heart

As you rest; be in silence.

Bask in stillness. (4)

For you alone my soul waits in silence;
From the Beloved comes my salvation.
Enfolding me with faith and steadfast love,
My faith shall remain firm. (62)

Commune with the Heart of your heart

As you rest; be in silence.

Bask in stillness.

Search me, O my Beloved, and know my heart!
Try me and discern my thoughts!
Help me to face the darkness within me;
Enlighten me, that I might radiate
Your Love and Light! (139)

Commune with the Heart of your heart

As you rest; be in silence.

Bask in stillness.

Pray in silence:

Slip into the sanctuary of the cave of your heart and in the silence, rest there and let your heart lead you to what matters.

Conclusion:

A blessing.

May your heart be rested
and your spirits buoyed.
May your countenance radiate
your inner light.
And, may the tangled threads of your weaving
in silence be transformed.



Glory to You, Source of All Being
Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning
Is now, and ever shall be. Amen, Amen.

- <http://friendsofsilence.net/blogs/lindsay/2016-11-24/how-silence-will-save-world>