
Lent: Noisy Contemplation

"Make everything in you an ear,
each atom of your being,
and you will hear the Source whispering to
you, just to you, and for you."
- Rumi

Getting Ready

You may want to light a candle
and/or set a **green and growing plant** on your altar-table.

You may have your own established practices of silent prayer,
meditation or centering prayer or you may want to try this practice of
silence.

'Entering the Silence,' is based upon a practice of the Seneca (Native
American) nation. The imagery is adapted from the words of Twylah
Nitsch:

Close your eyes. Breathe out three times.

Listen and hear the Silence . . .

Listen and see the Silence . . .

Listen and taste the Silence . . .

Listen and smell the Silence.

Breathe out one time. Listen and embrace the Silence.

(Shared from the Spirituality & Practice website)

Visio Divina: Our Image this Week [Photo by Janice MacLean]

Open your heart to a sense of the Holy that dwells within you as you gaze upon the photo.



Journal/Reflection Notes

Take some time to draw or write in response to your time of sacred seeing and prayer. It's not important to answer all the questions. The questions are meant to prompt your reflection. What are your questions?

What spoke to you from this photo?

What images, experiences or ideas does it connect with for you?

Were there moments you were led into mystery or knowing?

What invitation is present for you as you continue your Lent journey?

An Offering of Words: Noisy Contemplation

Right about now some of us might be thinking that another Lent is slipping by and the 'culture of busy' we hoped to shake up remains

determinedly frantic. The breathing space we hoped to carve out may be filling up. The practice(s) we accepted for forty days may be challenging to remember daily. These specially set aside days of getting ready begin to feel like ordinary times.

Is it like that for you?

Saint Benedict has a word for us. *"We are always beginning again."*

I recall these hopeful words about now. What matters is this moment. And this moment. And this moment. We are always beginning again. And so my breath prayer these mid-days of Lent is this: Wherever I am. God is.

We return to our soul-thirsts. And we cherish them because they call and recall us to our deepest desires.

William Callahan wrote a book called *Noisy Contemplation: Deep Prayer for Busy People*. In it he uses an image that many other spiritual writers have seized upon. Crabgrass Contemplation.

"Noisy contemplation is prayer for crabgrass Christians. Crabgrass grows anywhere. It's roots dig deep and bind the earth ... It will grow where there is even a crack in the sidewalk, but can burst forth in powerful growth when conditions are favourable ... "

Noisy contemplation seeks to build habits of prayer and presence rooted in the ordinary and everyday. Like crabgrass, it is prayer that fits into the common spaces of our day. It is persistent prayer for this moment and this moment and this moment. It is a practice for noisy times. We don't need physical silence or special set aside times for practicing noisy contemplation.

We know this. We come from traditions that didn't split the sacred and the secular in half but hold them together wholeheartedly. We know, without the mystics needing to remind us, that worship and work, prayer and politics, sacred and secular are one.

We know. And we forget. We are always beginning again. It is a spiral discovery and we come back to what we know again and again and each time we are a little different, a little more aware, a bit more awake.

So here we are again. This we remember.

Be attentive. Wonder and beauty are windows, icons, into Mystery and Presence. Opening the eyes of our heart allows us to see and receive routine miracles. We discover, as the songwriter Peter Mayer says, Everything is Holy Now. All of life is sacred. We don't take life for granted.

Be open. The more we face into life in an unguarded way, the more open we are to the pain and joy of living. We allow people, places, situations to impact us and leave a mark on us. Callahan says, *"We are not trying to see Christ in others (a practice Jesus seems not to have pursued). We are trying to see the other people for themselves, the approach Jesus used."* (pg. 101)

Be grateful. We practice gratitude in small ways like noticing three things a day that we are grateful for, in order to nurture an attitude of gratitude in our lives. Living from a heart of gratitude opens our hearts to respond to God, in all the events of our daily life, in ways that show love and compassion.

Be surprised. We nurture a constant willingness to be taken by surprise. The opposite, being jaded and cynical, closes down the fullness of our seeing. This openness to surprise is the call to "the risk of unprotected living." (Hermann Kaan)

Be still. Callahan's crabgrass spirituality proposes that we convert small moments of each day into the "cumulative habit of prayer." Martin Laird, in his book about silence argues that "silence surrounds all things." This is an amazing thought if you sit with it. Be it birdsong, waves, wind, ordinary noise or noisy thoughts, all are surrounded with silence. Silence resounds in all sound. Discovering this at the heart of all life invites deep silence.

- Your deepest desires are God's deepest desires for you. Your soul-thirsts show you the way to these deep desires. What words or images or colours might you use to give expression to these thirsts and the desires they point toward?

- As the Lent journey continues to unfold what challenges are you experiencing? What gifts are you receiving?
- What invitation is there for you in the ancient teaching, "We are always beginning again?"
- Do any of the "Be" practices (above) call to you for particular practice this week? Is there another "Be" you would add to the list that helps you be present?

Intention for the Week`

In one of her many books, Joyce Rupp quotes William Callahan and offers a simple yet challenging practice you might want to explore:

"Some years ago I read an article by William Callahan in which he described a form of prayer in the marketplace called "noisy contemplation." Callahan pointed out that to contemplate means to "look lovingly." He emphasized that it does not take much effort to pray in the context of busyness. We can all do it. One way is by casting a non-judgmental, loving gaze upon every person we meet. (Some spiritual teachers describe this gaze as "looking with soft eyes.") Callahan advised his students to first extend this loving gaze toward those who have a special place in one's heart. Then, to progressively hold colleagues, and finally, strangers, with this same kind look." ~ Joyce Rupp

The great Sufi Master, Hafiz, wrote a poem called "Buttering the Sky."

Slipping
On my shoes,
Boiling water,
Toasting bread,
Buttering the sky:
That should be enough contact
With God in one day
To make anyone
Crazy.

How might you give more **intention** to an ordinary part of your day in order to pay more **attention** to the sacredness of all life? (Doesn't Hafiz's words make you long for tea and hot buttered toast, eaten contemplatively?)

Blessing ...From the Heart of a Poet

This is a blessing from a tattered book of prayers that fell into my possession. I am appreciative of the poetry of its wording.

O Holy Spirit of God, visit now this soul of mine,
And tarry within it until eventide.
Inspire all my thoughts.
Pervade all my imaginations.
Suggest all my decisions.
Lodge in my will's most inward citadel and order all my doings.
Be with me in my silence and in my speech,
In my haste and in my leisure,
In company and in solitude,
In the freshness of the morning and in the weariness of the evening;
And give me grace at all times to rejoice in Thy mysterious
companionship.

- John Baillie, *A Diary of Private*