

The Sounds of Silence

*Reflections from an 8-day silent retreat
at the ocean's edge in Gloucester 2008*



I began with Jesus' question to two persons walking
along the seashore (John 1:35-42)

What are you looking for?

Their answer was another question:
Rabbi, where are you staying?

His reply to them became God's invitation to me:
Come and see.

They came, and saw. And stayed. And so did I.

“Because of Jesus' experience of God, he saw differently,”
writes Marcus Borg in *Jesus*.



and again at sunset. . .



The tangled mass of black branches is beautiful when I see them with aesthetic love. I see others here at retreat and know that we are related to each other through God. “We all go back to a single Center where we are at home with God and one another.”

Can we make all our relations to others relations which *pass through God*?

Prayer is changing too.

It is not we who pray, but a Greater who prays in us.

Prayer is taking place, and I am given to be in the orbit.

We are joyfully prayed through.

For a few quiet moments
we surveyed one another
before he spread his powerful
wings and flapped away.





Simplicity. .

*The mark of a
simplified life
is radiant joy.
Simplification comes
when we center down.*

It is that inner integration of soul that guides our minute choices all day long and thereby simplifies our life.

At the end of a woodland trail, I came out onto the rocky shore for which New England is famous. I couldn't resist the invitation of an enormous mound of solid rock.



Leaning against the rock with my whole body, caressing it to my face, I felt the rock move. Then breathing regularly, it seemed to be breathing with me. Could it be possible that my breathing was moving the rock? It was so huge, so grounded. The tide roared its pulsed rhythm in the background.



Breathe on me, breath of God.

*Morning fog
drifts in one day
mirroring my
unknowing.*



Slowly the sun breaks through the fog and sets the rushes aflame.



I am learning a new way of looking at St. John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul*. The Spanish word for darkness is *oscura* implying obscurity - rather than bleak despair. *The dark night is a person's hidden life in God*. The fog speaks to me of that obscurity into which I move when God takes me beyond what I know, beyond my striving.

*Sometimes I know what God is about within me. Today I don't.
I have all these pieces, these fragments. It helps me to spread them out
with my spiritual director. I don't look for any specific response from her.*



*In my work,
I need
to learn
to wait
to speak.*

Psalm 139 confirms this:
“Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.”

That's in accord with the Quaker sensibility
in waiting till “the Spirit bids me speak.”

It is also the moment of awareness.
Before I speak, God knows the word,
perhaps wants to *form* it,
and speak through me.

Then it is not *my* word, my clever insight,
but God breathing truth through me.



I turned my attention to small things as the week went on.



Turn anxiety into desire.

Those reflex reactions that constantly stream through my mind and distract me from *presence*, what Thomas Kelly calls *continually renewed immediacy*.

It is not the event that destroys, but the thoughts that follow. Stay with what *is* - the real person, the actual event. . .not to my processing of it, for this *leaves* the real and goes to its effect on *me*.

De-layer it in me - push through anxiety to desire. To love. Uncover the desire for God, for love. It is not a matter of producing it, or even finding it. It must be “de-layered.” Uncovered. For you, God, have made me for Yourself. You placed that desire in me. You set eternity in my heart.

