

Friends of Silence

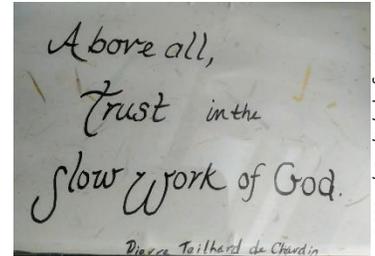
Vol. XXXIII, No. 7

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July/August, 2020

“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”

Dear Friends ~ Years ago, a friend made us a gift, a calligraphed beginning of a prayer attributed to Pierre Teilhard de Jardin: “Above all, trust in the slow work of God.” From a central spot in our dining room, these words reached out to me often while raising a large family and working with kids. The prayer calls to me now as the heat of July and August arrives on the tails of righteous anger, fires of social unrest, and the terrible toll and world-wide anxiety surrounding Covid-19. What can we parents, grandparents, educators, pastors, ordinary humans do for our world’s children?



We can turn to our Mother, the Earth, to soothe, amuse, and educate us in the *truly* slow work of God... Carry babies out to sing good night to the stars, explore streams, paths, and backyards where ants can be followed in their steady march to provide for their families... Find wild places, care for house-bound flower pots, grow veggies... Collect buttercups and smooth, multi-hued stones... Walk silently, even bravely... Splash noisily in streams and puddles... Look up at the remarkably blue sky revealing benefits of reduced emissions in a slower world... Look down... Look everywhere... Breathe deeply, exercise wonder... Find a three-year-old to lead the way... Invite a teen... Be amazed.

Maria Montessori, long ago, understood the power of wonder to anchor, soothe and motivate children.
We can, too. Indeed, we must. ~Mary Ann



In the child is much knowledge, much wisdom. If we do not profit from it, it is only because of neglect on our part to become humble and to see the wonder of this soul and learn what the child can teach.

~ Maria Montessori in *THE THEOSOPHIST*



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As infants we enjoy an intimacy with everything around us: tiny stones, butterflies, flowers, birds, animals both stuffed and real. We live in a world of beauty and imagination. Ecstasy comes easily. We feel at one with nature and the realm of dreams... The past, the future, the present: these are meaningless to us, for we have the ability to blend them into one. We can be anything we want at any time. . . Then at some point in our lives, that awareness changes . . . adults convince us that we are not all one.

~ John Perkins in *THE WORLD IS AS YOU DREAM IT*

“I encourage you to spend as much time with your family as your time allows, whether it's dancing, playing, walking, cooking, cleaning, being silly, or just hanging out. This can be a scary time for kids, and nothing will help ease their fears and encourage their cognitive and social development like spending time with you.” ... This same teacher is also emailing us [parents] a daily photo of a bird to identify... and sharing out-of-the-box ideas for the students’

unit this month on an appropriate topic: survival... but the words above are the words I will treasure as a parent for a long time. They will remind me to take a break from refreshing the updated coronavirus map, checking my school email, and cursing Amazon’s multitude of out-of-stock items.

Instead, I’ll look my 12-year-old daughter in the eyes and ask, “How you doing, Baby Goose?” I’ll accept my son’s challenge to a muddy soccer game in the backyard. I’ll take him by the hand and walk up our mountain one more time, grateful that during a crisis when all we have is each other, “each other” is exactly what we all need.

~ Justin Minkel, an elementary school teacher in Arkansas, “What our Children Need Most Right Now”: in *Education Week*, March 2020



Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement...get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.

~ Abraham Joshua Heschel

The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Nature*, Chapter VIII, 1836

“Patient Trust”

Above all, trust in the slow work of God

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually – let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.

Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (1881-1955)

“Every child is an idea of God.”

~ Erberhard Arnold

If I am slavishly attached
to the previous moment
Or if I'm already living
tomorrow's moments,
Then I am not free for
the moment of the eternal now

~ Macrina Weiderkehr in

WALK IN A RELAXED WAY

We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe and are connected with each other to form one whole unity.

~ Maria Montessori in

TO EDUCATE THE HUMAN POTENTIAL

*Joy is the by-product of
something not looked for.*

~ Nan Merrill

