

# Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ Wherever you are in this world, greetings and thank you for your generous donations helping us bring Nan’s letter to you. We warmly invite you to sit comfortably, breathe deeply. Look around and within, up and down, over, under, and out. Notice the diversity before your eyes. There’s diversity of vistas and horizons, smells and tastes, and the abundant flora and fauna blanketing this earth. Diversity is immediately apparent, openly offering its manifold and minute gifts. We see it in the flowers, trees, and landscapes. We feel it in music, dress, and cultures the world over. We may seek it in myriad cuisines. We marvel in our crayon boxes of the many skin tones humans inhabit. If we are lucky, we live diversity in our relationships, personal, local, and global. I feel particularly blessed in the diversity of our own family, in which the divine provided five children, all now grown: Asian, African American, three born to us, white Irish and German parents. Over the years, we added eight more through foster care!



Mary Ann Welter

Despite the abundance of our varied gifts, the human family is yin and yang. We sadly or stridently absorb the flip side of diversity. Our family was certainly not spared. I remember walking with my infant daughter close to me in a snuggly baby carrier on a busy street one sunny day when a man brushed close to me saying, while trying to reach for her, “Where’d you steal that baby?” Such clashes, most far more serious, send out their tentacles pulling us this way and that — some brought about by mundane or even holy differences binding us to bygone notions. Miraculously, some come round and conversely bend us toward the light of one another — not just accepting our differences, but embracing them. As you open our letter today, I invite you to consider the joy, pain, and strength of diversity with its innate ability to “bind us together in love.” ~ Mary Ann



Mary Ann Welter

**Diversity is the magic. It is the first manifestation, the first beginning of the differentiation of a thing and of simple identity. The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection.**

~ Thomas Berry in *THE DREAM OF THE EARTH*

Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization.

~ Mahatma Gandhi

In the modern working world, we define diversity as a concerted effort to accommodate the full spectrum of human experience.

~ Blaise Radley from “Understanding the Different Types of Diversity in the Workplace” on the *workday.com* blog

I saw before me a huge crowd which no one could count from every nation and tongue. They stood before the throne and the Lamb, dressed in long white robes and holding palm branches in their hands... They said, Amen! Praise the glory, wisdom and thanksgiving and honor, power and might to our God forever.

~ Revelations 7:9 in *THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE*

*All religions  
All this singing  
One song*

~ Rumi in *RUMI'S LITTLE BOOK OF THE HEART*

Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common... Celebrate it every day.

~ Winston Churchill

We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.

~ Jimmy Carter from "Jimmy Carter 95th Birthday" in *Newsweek* magazine

Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without.

~ William Sloane Coffin Jr. in  
*THE COLLECTED SERMONS OF WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN -  
THE RIVERSIDE YEARS*

If you're a boy and you like teaching, you like nursing, you would like to have a doll, that's OK. We should each be free to develop our own talents, whatever they may be, and not be held back by artificial barriers.

~ Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *MY OWN WORDS*

**May I mindfully appreciate  
the diversity  
of every being I encounter,  
who, like flowers,  
brings beauty, variety,  
and sustenance  
to our world.**

~ Jean Smith in *NOW!*:  
*THE ART OF BEING HUMAN*



Mary Ann Welter

**Hold fast to dreams  
for if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.  
Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.**

~ Langston Hughes, "Dreams" in  
*THE COLLECTED POEMS OF LANGSTON HUGHES*

**On the beach, at dawn;  
four small stones clearly  
hugging each other.  
How many kinds of love  
might there be in the the world,  
and how many formations might they make  
And who am I ever  
to imagine I could know  
such a marvelous business?**

~ Mary Oliver from "On the Beach" in *SWAN: POEMS AND PROSE POEMS*



Mary Ann Welter

**Leaders of the nations and all  
peoples,  
young and old,  
Give praise! Unite together in all  
your diversity,  
that peace and harmony might  
flourish on earth.**

~ Nan Merrill from her interpretation of  
"Psalm 148"  
in *PSALMS FOR PRAYING*