

HOMILIES – DECEMBER 13, 2020

HOW I WELCOME STILLNESS – DON LEAKE

Herman Hesse taught me that "Within me is a stillness, a sanctuary, a quiet, safe place to which I can go in my mind at any time and be myself."

There, I am intimate with my innermost thoughts and feelings. I feel centered, grounded, protected and safe. My well-being requires going on a regular basis to my sanctuary in prayer, contemplation, meditation and self hypnosis. When I pray, I am making requests to my higher power, or expressing gratitude for my blessings. When I meditate, I'm allowing my conscious mind to quiet so I am more open to listening to my soul and higher power. When I contemplate, my consciousness is a combination of prayer and meditation. I use self hypnosis to facilitate specific changes which I desire in my in thoughts, feelings and behavior..

Complementary to individual practice, I share stillness with others in Mary's exceptionally skillfully guided group meditation 10 o'clock Thursday mornings, and in our peer led 7 o'clock THURSDAY EVENING MEDITATION GROUP. The sharing of sacred space in stillness and community provides a sense of intimacy and connection which is profoundly supportive of my individual practice.

If I were to choose one word to describe the added value of individual and group practice to the quality of my everyday living it would be EQUANIMITY. Equanimity is accepting both the good and bad, especially in difficult situations, with a sense of mental calmness, composure, evenness of temper, balance, peacefulness, harmony and serenity.

Come explore with us the added value of practice to the quality of everyday living of you and those closest to you. No experience needed. We are all beginners in awakening in deepening levels of awareness to the gift of healing and renewal in stillness.

Meditation continues to be an important pandemic coping resource for me. You are warmly invited to zoom in! Meditation is good for the immune system of the body, mind and spirit! We hope you'll zoom in with us and give it a try!

ANN COOK-FRANTZ

Stillness

I do not have a quiet mind. In spite of growing up Quaker and spending years doing various forms of meditation, I still find it difficult to quiet my mind. The best I can do on most days is to breathe in, breathe out, and let the mind chatter on while I try to keep my focus on my heart. But sometimes, sometimes I truly experience deep stillness, and it is almost always in nature.

In the book “Time and Tide in Acadia” Christopher Camuto writes about a lovely fall evening in Maine when he was slowly canoeing up a meandering brook. He was searching for Wood Ducks, but never found them. It didn’t matter. Instead he found a kingfisher doing maneuvers in the sky, an otter making ripples in the water ahead of him, and chickadees that bulleted into a tamarack on his approach.^[1]_{SEP}

Reflecting on his experience, he noted that nature encourages us to think and feel in primal ways, to clear our heads and hearts of noise, to observe the world closely, partly to see it for what it is and partly to absorb it as a threshold for imaginative understanding of the nature of nature and our place in it.

To my mind — to my ear— the Hermit Thrush has the most beautiful song of any bird on the face of the earth. It’s tone is flute-like — its song floats in 4 different ranges — and to hear it in the evening or morning in the woods is to experience something ethereal. A year ago I was staying with in family in Acadia, and announced that I would not be able to leave until I had heard the hermit thrush sing. Perhaps my son-in-law was a little concerned about my threat, but in any case he said, “Well if you get up and sit on the porch at 4:30 in the morning, I think you will hear it.” Mornings aren’t my “thing” but this was crucial.

What happened was so magical I can go back to a state of peace just thinking about it. At first there was the utter stillness of the “dark before the dawn.” No sound. The barest hint of light emerged, but still all was quiet. And then, like the opening solo phrase of a symphony, the Hermit Thrush began to sing — first hesitantly — and then a bit steadier — and finally full throated. I think other birds started to sing too — they always do — but I was so deeply focused with so much stillness inside, I didn’t notice.

