

Meditation - Quiet and stillness - 8th December 2020

Jenny and I must have similar thoughts at times. Earlier in the year we both talked about the death of a loved one and now on a very different theme Jenny's offering last week was about 'Silence'. When I received it I had already started to write my Meditation for this week about 'Silence' and stillness and quiet but I am sure they will be very different.

Silence! what is silence? It is not just the absence of voices and it can often be regarded by many as being synonymous with stillness and peace, it can also be said that it is the absence of sound. Silence can be internal as well as external.

Some people don't like silence, they can find it threatening, others long for silence especially if they have been dealing with young children all day or working in a factory teaching or busy office.

It is very difficult to find a silent place. We may sit down in the house or garden or when we are out on a walk, trying to find a few moments quiet but the house creaks, the guttering can make quite a noise as it contracts in the heat. Birds will chatter away in the bushes and trees that surround our houses or in woodland where we walk; cars may be heard in the distance or passing by the house, aeroplanes fly overhead, not as many of these two sources of noise recently during lockdown. So where can we find a silent place? Even at night insects, grasshoppers, crickets, frogs all make their own noise to add to the cacophony that is in nature. It is not earth shattering as in an explosion, but it can be quite distracting and disturbing to some people. My mother-in-law, who lived alone, used to complain about the noise of her fridge and yet to us it was hardly noticeable.

If we are busy we may never notice all the noise that surrounds us but we all have internal noise. We can sit down to have a time of quiet but the voices in our heads won't cease, our thoughts dart around from one thing to another. I do find the more quiet time I take the better it gets. I remember being in church trying to concentrate on the sermon but my unquiet mind wouldn't let me, the voices continued to chatter. Through taking a few moments of quiet most days helped my head to be still and gradually, over time my thoughts became calmer and I was able to listen and digest what was being said or I could take time to sit quietly in contemplation.

I also found the following from Celtic Daily Prayer helpful.

Calm me, O Lord, as you stilled the storm.

Still me, O Lord, keep me from harm.

Let all the tumult within me cease.

Enfold me, Lord, in your peace.

I often say this over and over again when I am awake during the night to quiet my over active mind and to try to help me get back to sleep.

I read the following in the Transforming Ministry magazine recently, it was a notice pinned to the door of a Roman Catholic church that was visited by many tourists although it was not specifically a tourist attraction:-

He asks us: Have you reflected on what happens when you enter through a church door? Have you ever experienced that such a door is a connection between two worlds? On the one side, there is the hustle and bustle of daily life, with work and with business, with its sorrows and its conviviality, a life that we enjoy with its abundance of good things, but also a life where we encounter evil, misery, lies, deceit and suspicion. On the other side is this space where we can come with our restlessness and sorrows, to find peace and tranquillity. Here the light is different, softened by an atmosphere of reflection and prayer: where our look becomes different and deeper. We are in the house of God, where everything speaks of his goodness and his merciful love. This is what many visitors, pilgrims and tourists feel. May this experience be shared by every person that passes through this church door.

As this will be the last reflection I write before Christmas may I wish you all a very blessed Christmas.
Amen