# Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation Sacred Silence January 9, 2020

From the Center for Action and Contemplation

Most of us who live in a capitalist culture, where everything is about competing and comparing, will find contemplation extremely counterintuitive. How do we grasp something as empty, as harmless, as seemingly fruitless as the practice of silence? Only when we know that it also offers a “peace beyond understanding” (Philippians 4:7) and a “joy that no one can take from you” (John 16:22).

Silence needs to be understood in a larger way than simply a lack of audible noise. Whenever emptiness—what seems like empty space or absence of sound—becomes its own kind of fullness with its own kind of sweet voice, we have just experienced sacred silence.

When religious folks limit their focus in prayer to external technique and formula, the soul remains largely untouched and unchanged. Too much emphasis on what I call “social prayer” or wordy prayer feeds our egos and gives us far too much to argue about. That is surely why Jesus emphasized quiet prayer in one’s own “inner room” and warned us not to “babble on as the pagans do” (Matthew 6:5-7). Oh, the years we Catholics and others have wasted arguing about liturgy in a juridical way! For me, law and liturgy are two different realms. How can we truly pray when we are preoccupied with formula and perfection of technique?

If we can see silence as the ground of all words and the birth of all words, then when we speak, our words will be calmer and well-chosen. Our thoughts will be non-judgmental. Our actions will have greater integrity and impact.

When we recognize something as beautiful, that knowledge partly emerges from the silence around it. It may be why we are quiet in art galleries and symphony halls. If something is not surrounded by the vastness of silence and space, it is hard to appreciate it as singular and beautiful. If it is all mixed in with everything else, then its particularity does not stand out.

As one author I read years ago said, silence is the net below the tightrope walker. [1] We are walking, trying to find the right words to explain our experience and the right actions to match our values. Silence is that safety net that allows us to fall; it admits, as poets often do, that no words or deeds will ever be perfectly right or sufficient. So the poet keeps trying, for which we are grateful! The great spaciousness and safety net beneath a tightrope walker is silence; it offers freedom from self-preoccupation and the fear of making a mistake. A regular practice of contemplation helps us trust that silence will uphold us, receive our mistakes, and give us the courage to learn and grow.

**Gateway to Action & Contemplation:** What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?

**Prayer for Our Community:** O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, amen.

[1] Max Picard, The World of Silence, trans. Stanley Godman (H. Regnery: 1964, ©1952), 22.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, [Silent Compassion: Finding God in Contemplation](https://email.cac.org/t/d-l-xkkhrtt-jruyhdhdhu-y/) (Franciscan Media: 2014), 7-9.

<https://onbeing.org/programs/gordon-hempton-silence-and-the-presence-of-everything/>

**Upcoming Events**

* **Feb 2 Mason Congregational Church Annual Meeting** This is your exciting appetizer to the Super Bowl! Don’t miss it. Help yourself to coffee and snacks, and settle in for our very efficiently run meeting. We need everyone who can be there to be sure there is a quorum to vote on the nominating slate, and our 2020 budget! Thanks
* **February 8th  3:30pm Nashua Soup Kitchen** Meet in the church parking lot at 3:30 for carpooling to Nashua. We are usually back by 6:30 or 7pm. Share your love and energy in this outreach mission of our community. Contact Kathy Chapman, [chapman.kathy@gmail.com](mailto:chapman.kathy@gmail.com) or 878-4993 if you plan to go or need information. We welcome members of the community in this service mission.
* **February 13 Thursday 5:30 to 7 pm Community Supper -** Bring a friend or yourself, be ready to savor a good meal, and enjoy your community! Don’t let food sensitivities keep you home – Each community supper has a gluten-free, dairy-free, and nut-free entrée for our special guests. And you can contribute to the wider community by bringing something canned or boxed for our local food pantry at St Vincent De Paul, and put it in the bin near our side entrance—thank you.

## February 15th 6:30 pm. Living Room Coffee House. Sign up for open mic for music, or poetry reading, share in the bountiful food offerings before the music starts at 7 pm. **Michael Nix**,**** performs on classical guitar, banjo, and mandolin, throughout the United States and Asia; recorded for the PBS series “American Experience”, independent documentaries, numerous CD projects. His compositions are performed internationally. His music has been heard “Weekend Edition”, and other NPR programs. Recently Nix performed his compositions at the Smithsonian Museum of American History, and participated in Seegerfest 2014, commemorating the life of Pete Seeger. Banjo innovator, Nix designed the Banjar; a modern seven string banjo combining elements of the five-string banjo and classical guitar; bringing the classic finger-style banjo of the late 1800’s into the twenty first century. <https://thelivingroomcoffeehouse.wordpress.com/>

* **In honor of the upcoming Ash Wednesday service** we will have a Mardi Gras “Fat Sunday” celebration on February 23rd after worship. Wear your Mardi Gras beads, and enjoy some special foods, and music characteristic of this celebration during our coffee hour. What is **Ash Wednesday?** It is the beginning of the 40 day Lenten time of self examination, repentance, prayer, fasting, and self-denial in preparation for the Easter resurrection and joy.
* **Ash Wednesday February 26th.** Worship service will be in Mason at 7pm to share with our Brookline brothers and sisters. And we will hold Maundy Thursday in Brookline Community Church at 7 pm.

 **Remember our church family in your prayers, and in person with a visit, a call, or a card. Loneliness can be relieved, at least temporarily, and price of this “gift” is mostly free!**

* **Halbrooks family** are now at 279 Mountain Road, Jaffrey, NH 03452. Hoping to get the word that they are settled in and ready to have us all come over! Will keep you posted. Meanwhile you can send a snail mail message telling them we are keeping their pew reserved.
* **Curt Dunn** Curt is at the rehab center Courville, 44 West Webster Street in Manchester. Although he has trouble reading, he still loves cards, but of course, enjoys calls and visits even more. As with his many neighbors in Courville, his health is fragile, so don’t bring any germs with you! Courville phone is 647-5900
* **Gary Corning and Barbara** These two reliable, steady members of our community are going through some challenging times. Gary has headed off cancer more times than you can imagine—and we attribute that to his faith, his good humor, his energetic and loving wife, and his healthcare team. You can reach them at 246 Old Ashby Rd, Mason [barbaracorning246@gmail.com](mailto:barbaracorning246@gmail.com) or 878-4909
* Lisa and Brian Charbonneau, 130 Jeds Lane, Mason, NH 03048 878-1502. Welcome to Mason Church!
* **Susan and Jim Suokko** have moved to Leominster, MA. Their new address is: 50 Brooks Pond Rd, Apt 104, Leominster, MA 01453. They will be attending a church near their home, and as usual will be in Florida during the winter months.
* **Laila Washburn This is Laila’s 101st year!** Laila lives at Summer Hill Assisted Living in Peterborough. She loves company and cards. At her age every day is treasured. Laila Washburn, Summer Hill, 183 Old Dublin Rd, Peterborough, NH 03458. Call ahead if you have questions. 603-924-6238
* **Gretchen and Wally Brown** Always in need of a little cheer, and Gretchen needs contact with the outside world, so stop by with a smile, a meal, or just to pick up syrup and say hello!

Cards to: 421 Meetinghouse Hill Rd, Mason, NH 03048 phone: 878-1481

* **Peggy Lee** Welcome to Peggy who worshiped with us last week, and shared our coffee hour social time. She lives in New Ipswich, so help her meet Jean Randle and Helen Emma when she comes again.
* **Prayer Shawl ministry.** Susan Suokko was the amazing shepherd of this mission, and has left it in the hands of the Deacons. We need everyone’s help to continue the mission. If you know of someone who needs a prayer shawl, please let us know. Per Susan’s protocol, we sew a special cross onto the shawl (unless you request otherwise), we adapt our Prayer Shawl Prayer especially to fit the person it’s given to, and we package it up in a pretty bag for delivery. We will mail one to someone far away, deliver it to the person, or give it to you to deliver. Whatever works! **And,** of course, we need knitters. If you know someone who knits and wants to contribute, just let us know, and we can provide the yarn. Contact [mscott39@gmail.com](mailto:mscott39@gmail.com) for info or help.
* **Thank you to everyone who helps with our coffee hour after worship—what great hosts you all are!**

