

and silence. Both of these places are solitary. When the moment arises for us to step back into time, messengers become available, and we can give our experience form through words or other means of expression. It is important that both our companions and we ourselves honor these times of silence, so that the divine illumination may be given to our souls. Shattering the silence before God's work is done can leave us in a profound state of both internal and external agitation. Evelyn Underhill wrote, "Silence is my home." May we not stop others, or ourselves, as we make these journeys home, and may we not misinterpret the ensuing silence as lost love.

Clare had a profound respect for silence. She was known for her abstemious use of words, and the daily life that she created for the sisters honored this valuing of silence in its rhythm of prayer and work. She said, "silence keeps us close to God" (De Robeck, 88–89). Silence is also that delicate space between lovers. Rumi writes,

*"No more words. In the name of this place we drink in
with our breathing, stay quiet like a flower.
So the nightbirds will start singing" (32).*

This is that infinite space where we meet God, where eternal songs are audible only to the soul. Let us drink in these songs of love and, like the saints, become intoxicated by the divine love illuminated through ourselves and our companions. The great beauty of this space is that it is open to us all, as friends, as lovers, as community. The nightbirds are always there, waiting to sing to whoever will breathe into the silence.

Companion Meditation:

Come into the stillness of your being, and let yourself be immersed in the silence. Let go, and merge with the Great Silence. You are infinitely loved here. Let yourself go even deeper. Enter the infinite spaciousness of this love. Meet yourself here. Meet your companion here. And love.

Community Meditation:

Does the spirit of silence live within the soul of your community?

Invite the spirit of the Great Silence to come and dwell within your souls.

Breathe into the love of this silence and sigh into yourselves. Hear the nightbirds singing. Hear the nightbirds of your community singing. Bring back those songs for all to hear, in whatever form they want to be expressed.