

**(W)holy, (W)holy, (W)(holy
Health, Healing and Wholeness
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If as Herod, we fill our lives with things, and again with things; if we consider ourselves so unimportant that we must fill every moment of our lives with action, when will we have time to make the long, slow journey across the desert, as did the Magi? Or sit and watch the stars as did the shepherds? Or brood over the coming of the child as did Mary? For each one of us there is a desert to travel; a star to discover, and a being within ourselves to bring to life. – Michael Podesta

For many, there is nothing quite as beautiful as the absolute silence of a winter snowfall. The world looks as though God has taken a flour sifter, and gently tapped the snow through, allowing it to kiss the surfaces of trees and shrubs. For those of us who live in urban and suburban areas, there is usually a small window of opportunity in which to enjoy this sacred time, for soon enough, the air will be filled with the sounds of snow plows, as they dredge through God's frosting to once again expose the dark ground. Unearthing these paths allows us to resume our lives of work, school, activities and busyness. For those in rural areas, the reprieve perhaps lasts a bit longer.

We are entering the liturgical season of epiphany-the awakening to the light of the presence of the Christ come to earth. It was the time when the wise men slowly made their way across barren land to pay their homage to the new king they had heard whispers about. Herod had tried to detain them, to beg them to do his bidding by revealing the location of an infant who could threaten his seat of power. Were they wise because of their vast knowledge of the world, or because they would not allow themselves to be pawns in Herod's paranoia, and his quest for complete supremacy? The journey was slow, with little to distract their minds from anything but what lie ahead. To our lives today, what a gift, that silence could bring!

Elijah also knew the power of silence. God told him, "*Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.*" Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire **a sound of sheer silence...then** there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah? He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus." And God rolled out a plan for Elijah to anoint a new king.

Yes, it is January. We've just heralded in a new year. We've survived the well-intentional noise and hustle of the holidays, made resolutions, and perhaps already broken them. I would like to suggest that perhaps to what God is calling us to do? The psalmist says, "*My soul in silence waits*". For some of us, the sheer silence of a winter snow may offer us the opportunity to hear what God is proposing. For those who do not experience snow, it may mean carving out some time to be alone; listening.

Here is a short exercise to help you open yourself to God. While sitting, take a break from whatever you're doing, and check your body for tension. Relax your facial muscles and allow your jaw to fall open slightly. Loosen your tongue from the roof of your mouth. Let your shoulders drop. Let your arms fall to your sides. Allow your hands to loosen so that there are spaces between your fingers. Uncross your legs or ankles. Feel your thighs sink into your chair, letting your legs fall comfortably apart. Feel your shins and calves become heavier and your feet grow roots into the floor. Now breathe slowly and breathe out slowly. Each time you breathe out, try to relax even more. Allow a simple phrase, such as "*My soul in silence waits,*" to drift through your mind as you relax. Maintain this quiet for as long as you can. What is God saying in the silence?

Through these stops with God, we learn that life isn't about what we are doing or becoming. It's embracing what is, instead of resisting it, and opening ourselves to God's whispers of love and peace now and on the journey ahead.

A Blessed New Year to All!

Debbie Best