

Quiet Places

The Newsletter of The Quiet Garden Movement

Jesus said: "Come with me by yourselves and get some rest" (Mark 6.31)

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Fractured Light – A random celebration of encounters in places where things grow

Father Dominic Milroy from Ampleforth Abbey

- extracts from his address to our Annual Gathering



Father Dominic began by exploring the relationship between usefulness and beauty, gardens and buildings, in the development of monastic and domestic buildings. "In the garden ... there is really no clear demarcation between the useful and the beautiful... The growth of a rose is not without its uses, and the growth of a cabbage is not without its beauty."

As a young boy, Father Dominic encountered a walled garden – "the sheer glory of an enclosed space where nothing seemed to be happening but where I sensed that everything was happening. One of the features of a garden is its silence – a silence that is only enhanced by the murmuring of bees and the totally unquantifiable singing of birds. Even in the heart of a city ... this silence can outweigh the noise of a million cars."

Silence and attention are under threat in our lives today. "True attention ... demands time and patience...The garden itself teaches us to be patient, and its silent call on our attention teaches us how to contemplate. Contemplation is the art of giving sustained attention without hurry. ... The now, the present moment, of a garden, is out of time. Its 'now' has links with the past, with its time of sowing and planting and pruning, and with the future, with its time of blossom and fruit and fall. But these links, when you contemplate the garden, are imperceptible and irrelevant. The garden only exists in the 'now' of its waiting and of its present season. The processes of germination, growth and fading are essentially as invisible and as silent as God. They are easy to ignore and can only be reached by an unhurried, contemplative gaze."

Father Dominic reminded us that processes important to gardening such as respecting the seasons, discipline, waiting, patience, are also important in human communities. "If the purpose of the trellis in the garden is to enable the tomatoes or the sweet peas to flourish, so that they may become either useful or beautiful or both, the purpose of the Rule in the monastery is the same; ie not to limit the freedom or circumscribe the growth of the individual, but rather to foster the conditions in which real freedom can thrive, and to create the spaces which are appropriate for the growth of each."

In the same way Quiet Gardens can offer support and space for growth for each person.



The primary vision of The Quiet Garden Trust is to initiate and resource a network of local opportunities for prayer, silence, reflection and the appreciation of beauty; for learning about Christian life and spirituality; for experiencing creativity and healing in the context of God's love.

Reflections on a “Quiet Garden” Morning

It had not been a happy week. I was still reeling from shock at the sudden death of a close friend. Tears had been shed and prayers said. Now it was Saturday and I was due to attend a "Quiet Garden" morning, and I needed that - to be able to walk quietly in a garden and think, leaving the hustle and bustle of everyday life behind for a while. The Lord had different ideas! I woke to gently falling rain so any ideas I had of walking in the garden were soon quelled. But, as always, the Lord has ways of turning things around for our benefit.

John and Jenny Frye's home has an ambiance of peace and even though we sat inside we were able to look out on their very tranquil garden. Jenny had chosen a passage from the Bible which deals with the promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14: 15-23). She read it slowly a couple of times and then we were left to contemplate what we had heard. After this group meditation we were given another passage (Acts 2: 1-4) and were free to move to any of the rooms and sit in silence for the rest of the morning.

I found myself in the study seated at a window that overlooks the garden with Chapman's Peak in the background. After I had studied the assigned passage, I just sat and let the thoughts come. On the window sill stood a plain wooden cross, about 50 cm in height. It was etched against the background of the mountain. Between the two were the trees. On the left was a tree with soft tips of lightly-coloured leaves, under-girthed by darker ones. Next to that was a tree of a different texture and colour altogether and beyond were russet colours from the neighbour's garden.

I sat and stared at this for a while, my mind a complete blank, when all of a sudden the first line of Psalm 121 popped into my head. *"I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from?"* At that moment, a huge gust of wind rustled through the trees. As I watched I saw how all the different trees were bent and changed with the force of it and I realised that the gift of the Holy Spirit bends, changes and reshapes us just as the wind had done to the trees.



Quiet Garden, Western Cape,



The wind settled a bit and I looked at the tree on the left. Its paler tips reminded me of the tongues of fire which settled above the heads of the disciples when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then the rain came down again. I looked again at the cross standing out starkly – I had felt the pain of it over the last two weeks – but it seemed to me that I should look beyond it, lift my eyes to the Creator of the hills and would find my help will coming in the form of the Holy Spirit. The words I had read earlier from John's Gospel, Chapter 14 verse 19, came to me in a vivid way: *"Because I live, you also will live."* What a wonderful promise, what an awesome promise, what a blessed assurance!

Yes, He will fill my "glass" to the brim with the Holy Spirit if I ask for this gift, if I love Him and obey what He commands. I turned once more to the passage and felt a surge of gratefulness for that promise of life. At that moment I was so filled with a sense of awe that I started to "sing" in my heart all the songs of praise that I know. When I had finished I realised that my cheeks were wet with tears. God had made me very aware of his loving Presence. I felt inspired, humbled and extremely grateful. And my earnest prayer to Him was "Lord, as you fill the underground aquifers with this gently falling rain, please fill my glass to the brim."

The time set aside in the Frye's "Quiet Garden" to be still and know that He is God was precious; it was a time for reflection and prayer in the beauty of silence and it met my current need as I tried to come to terms with what had been happening over the last couple of weeks. It left me feeling refreshed in body, mind and spirit, ready to go out and face the week ahead. Another "Quiet Garden" morning will definitely be on my agenda in future.

*Penny Spence
A participant in a Quiet Garden Morning
Western Cape, S Africa*

Life: A Winding Journey



The Labyrinth at Lake Havasu

At eventide, I made my way to Grace Parish to see the newly created labyrinth at the front of the church. As I started walking to the left into the formation, I followed the path while observing the stones that made the “walls” of the labyrinth. About midway through, the many paved twists and turns appeared to me a reflection of life’s many twists that one must meander, always continuing forward, on and on, twisting and turning. One may not know exactly where the next divergence will appear, but it is inevitable that it will present itself. Upon finally entering the center circle, I stood silent and still, pondering on the meaning of my small but intricate journey I had just performed.

I stood looking at the stones all around me, each one a different color, size, texture. The meaning of these rocks, forming the path of my just completed journey, finally became evident: these stones, each and every one, were representative of the plethora of emotions, scenes, situations, events, people and whatever else that comprises and forms the human life. Just as each stone is unique, formed from the unfathomable creativity of the Lord, so likewise is every day, indeed, each inimitable moment, of an individual’s existence. And just as each stone is required to remain in its correct location so as to advance the journeyman along the paths, and not to be diverted, each moment and encounter we experience in our lives will progress us, nurture us, along our own individual journeys we call life.

I took in the circular structure of the labyrinth, a symbol of the universe, its inhabitants, and the ceaseless continuity of it all. I gazed inquisitively upon the center circle. There were no further paths to walk.

Was this indicative of an ended existence?

Was this where death is supposed to meet the living; the point where one was allowed entry into the celestial kingdom?

My eyes made their way to the sky, and as I inhaled deeply, taking deep into my lungs the crisp desert air, I reflected on the paradox of my profoundly complex but minute being, a slight shiver running wildly through my body. A cool breeze had blown over me, like a gentle comforting hand. I slowly moved my foot across the fine gravel; the ineffable qualities of the instance whispering to me answers I would not be able to decipher and comprehend until a proper time. I slowly exhaled, as in almost a ritualistic manner.

After this short reflection, I felt compelled back to the reality of the moment. I turned round and thought briefly about how I was to exit the formation. I could step over the stones I had previously passed, therefore disturbing the continuum to which I had just so painstakingly adhered, or I could retrace my steps through the winding paths. Would this be, then, a symbol of reincarnation? Everlasting life? I suppose the mystery of the labyrinth and its multitudinous meanings will continue onward as long as there are those who are willing to muse with, willing to reflect on, willing to follow the winding paths; the paths our Lord has set before us. Amen.

Pio Petralli

who was walking

*The Labyrinth at Grace Episcopal
Lake Havasu, Arizona, U.S.A.*



The Labyrinth at Maria Alm, Austria

New Labyrinth leaflet

Quiet Garden Co-ordinator, Mollie Robinson, has written a leaflet “The Labyrinth and its Uses”. This resource gives information on the history and meaning of the labyrinth. There are suggestions for walking the labyrinth and possible designs for creating one.

If you are interested in creating a Labyrinth in your Quiet Garden, and would like a leaflet, please contact the Quiet Garden office.

Body Prayer in a Quiet Garden

Many Quiet Gardeners have found body prayer, alone or in a group, to be a wonderful way of deepening a sense of attentiveness to God, here and now. Here are two simple examples:

Walking Prayer

To ensure balance, look ahead of you at the ground, anywhere from just in front of your toes to about 4 feet ahead of you. Walk in a gentle but measured way in a straight line or a largish circle. Walk with a heel to toe movement, lifting the foot clear of the ground and allowing there to be a flowing movement forward from foot to foot. Any surface will do. Feel free to wear shoes or no shoes. It is lovely to be able to do this outside on grass or path. If doing walking prayer as a group, participants can either form into a circle, be in a straight line or in random formation, depending on the space available. Just ensure that there is enough space between you and your neighbour. If necessary, overtake quietly!

Breathing Prayer

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess, 5: 17). Prayer is as fundamental to the health of the soul and spirit as breath is to the life of the body. To breathe is to participate in an essential rhythm of life. If we weave prayer into our breathing we find ourselves more able to approach the mystery of unceasing prayer. This, is not a long list of prayers and petitions, it is a matter of placing our life, context and community into the mystery of God’s love. Simply breathe quietly and prayerfully and be present to God and to your neighbour. We can receive God’s blessing in our own being and then pass it on to those we meet and have concern for in our daily lives.

Philip D Roderick, Director, The Quiet Garden Trust

Annual Gathering - news from Quiet Gardens

It was a day of attentiveness and listening, friendly discussion and laughter; a sense of a continually evolving Movement. Sixty people gathered to be inspired by our main speakers, Father Dominic and Philip Roderick and the following three Quiet Garden hosts.

Jane Hinton spoke of a ministry to “love, listen and liberate” offered through a safe space and themed creative retreats at Whitegables Quiet Garden.

Heather Black told us of the development of The Cloister Garden, N. Ormesby to provide a place of calm in touch with nature, in a neighbourhood with no green space.

Frank McDermott shared how the Quiet Garden in urban Stainforth grew from a vandalised site and now offers monthly Quiet Days, and welcomes local schools. Prisoners from a local prison help with the maintenance of the garden.

North-West Explorations



Polesworth Abbey

In April, I finally managed to set off on a long anticipated trip to Lancashire and Cumbria. It was not without a little trepidation - I had a packed schedule for three and a half days before our Trustees’ meetings near York.

Yet, throughout the week I had a deep sense of being undergirded. I was able to visit five Quiet Gardens, each with their own carefully tended setting, and to explore possibilities with four households considering their own potential to host a Quiet Garden.

What a way to start the journey; by dropping in to see Fr Philip at Polesworth Abbey, with its twelfth century monastic foundation, and now enlivened by a vision to bring the local community back into the heart of Abbey life. Their Quiet Garden is specifically for the sensory deprived. A rich educational programme enables school children to become monks and nuns for a day. Being in a habit apparently does wonders for behaviour!

Later I was at St Mark’s, Haydock, now affiliated with us. In a very urban setting, they have created a Community Garden and Quiet Garden from a derelict piece of land. Local residents will be offered a huge builder’s bag in which to grow flowers or vegetables, and will be able to take a prayer walk through willow arches adjacent to a wild-life area – a very holistic approach.

Hawkshead Chapel in Cumbria is a veritable oasis for body and soul. Drinks are offered freely to the casual walker, and a poustinia (converted from a pig sty) provides an evocative, simple context for deep prayer and solitude. I hope to return!

My trip was, in a sense, a microcosm in action of my work back in the office and will remain deeply etched on my memory. Each visit held its own divine touch: from the prison, where I was able to help with activating plans to transform an area by the Chapel into a secluded space for prisoners, to the Bishop’s home where cascading daffodils beg to be shared!

*Mollie Robinson, Quiet Garden Coordinator,
The Quiet Garden Trust*