

THE Chapel Bell

April 28, 2020

Living Silence

Breathing Silence



It is everywhere. Sometimes it is welcome; other times not so much. It has the power to move us to tears or to dance. It is full of mystery. It fills the world with emotion. If we cannot hear it, we can feel it. And when we can hear it, each of us feels something different. Every living soul is rooted in it. There is no right or wrong way to experience it. I am speaking of music, but I could be speaking of God.

When I play a piece of music on the piano, I observe the rests. These moments are silent, so it seems like nothing is happening. Are the rests as important as the notes? I think so. During a musical pause, rests prevent a cacophony of ceaseless

noise, and our minds have a chance to absorb what we have heard. When my day is ceaseless noise, whether from family, work, life, or even my own mind, intentional time with God fills my heart and heals my soul. I try to remember to pause periodically during my day and listen for God's voice. These times of rest and "being" are as important as times of productivity and "doing". I cannot have one without the other.

During a session meeting this past fall and on the men's retreat in January, our members were introduced to audio divina, a way of praying with music through sacred listening. The music we listened to and prayed with, "Spiegel im Spiegel" (mirror in the mirror) is by an Estonian composer, Arvo Pärt. It is minimalist in style. The repetitive triads, coupled with a somewhat dissonant melody, creates an "interplay between suffering and consolation, loss and hope, as if there were two voices that together form one." After hearing this piece, many members sought out the music because they were moved in a way they couldn't fully explain. Pärt wrote this particular piece after an eight-year dormant period during which he composed hardly any music. After this time of silence and gestation,

most of his compositions were written from settings of biblical texts or Christian prayers. He stated, “The words write my music.”

Why are we so petrified by silence? Presumably because we think nothing happens in silence. Silence is void, emptiness, blank space. But music’s metrical waves extend even through silence. We can sense them even when there is no music...These silences sound charged because of the memory of what has been and the anticipation of what will be, so we are pulled in and held in. Even in the most numbing of silences, when God’s absence seems most deadening, the raising of the crucified Jesus from the dead sends a wave arcing through the silence to resurrection day, and by the Spirit we can catch it and sense it – and the silence can live. -Jeremy Begbie

Our world is silent in a new way with COVID-19; muffled, distanced, and virtual. Yet, if we listen closely, the music of creation may be heard.

Listen to the hymn “For the Music of Creation”, and read the text here. [Click here](#) to read the full article about the prayerful work of Arvo Pärt. Visit the Spiritual

Practices section of this Chapel Bell for a link to his composition “Spiegel im Spiegel” and to learn more about audio divina.

Blessings and Peace,

Anne Peacock