

The Practice of Mystical Presence

The Bell and the Blackbird

—David Whyte



The sound of a bell
Still reverberating,
or a blackbird calling
from a corner of the field,
asking you to wake
into this life,
or inviting you deeper
into the one that waits.

Either way
takes courage,
either way
wants you to be nothing
but that self that
is no self at all,

wants you to walk
to the place
where you already know
how to give
every last thing away.

The approach
that is also
the meeting itself,
without any meeting
at all.

That radiance
you have
always carried with you

as you walk both alone
and completely
accompanied
in friendship
by every corner
of the world
crying

Allelujah.

From Christopher Pramuk's book, At Play in Creation

Thomas Merton shares his dream: *Last night I had a curious and moving dream about a "Black Mother." Indeed, I owed, it seemed, my life to her love so that it was she really, and not my natural mother, who had given me life. As if from her hand had come a new life and there she was. Her face was ugly and severe, yet a great warmth came from her to me, and we embraced with great love (and I with much gratitude). What I recognized was not her face but the warmth of her embrace and of her heart.*

What Merton "recognized" in this dream, it seems to me, was the very same "presence" he strived to recognize in everyone: "the warmth of her embrace and of her heart." No matter that "her face was ugly and severe," what moves Merton is that "a great warmth came from her to me," "as if from her hand had come a new life." Notice how Merton experiences himself as the object of Wisdom's intimate attention; her embrace is transitive, so to speak, breaking in "from her to me" yet coming in the form of this concrete person or thing before him right now: the flight of an escaping dove; a lone deer feeding among the trees outside the hermitage; the faces of passersby on a busy street corner. For she is playing in the world, obvious and unseen, playing at all times before the Creator.

From Sufi author, Kabir Helminski

The idea of presence is a practical one. When a person has learned to practice presence, it is owned and valued. And the person is transformed.

What helps us to be free of the demanding ego? Discovering our own presence which is one with the divine presence. Presence is our very self, our **I am**: it is a space that can be filled by qualities of spirit: love, compassion, generosity, courage, wisdom.

To enter presence, enter wordless silence. Give the intellect rest. Let thoughts subside. Allow the feelings to become still and empty. Cross a threshold into stillness. It is like entering Cathedral within yourself, a sacred space that holds great presence.

We can learn to feel our being through presence; our sense of **I am** emerges through contemplative presence. Our own presence, our sacred **I am** can always be trusted. Our **I am** is secure, merciful, connected and one with Infinite Spirit.

From Robert Sardello

When I am fully present in my heart and body, there's an expansion of presence and love in the world. When I am in body feeling sensing, I am also present to silence, to Sophia. I am an incarnation of Sophia in the world. As Sophia re-members me, my body, she re-members those I am with, and I initiate her awakening in each person. I can always return home to my own body-sensing and feeling-heart, to my own presence.

A Practice: For the next two months practice Mystical Presence in your prayer and throughout your day. String the moments of Presence together through intention.

This is a practice of a practice of body-feeling, and heart-sensing from the space of silence. Let this Presence flow into the world through you.

How do you experience that a person is transformed through presence?
that mystical presence frees us of the demanding ego, heals us and those around us?