

Reflections

By Eleanor Flack, Okehampton Quakers

Kay has been telling me of her recent experience of a few days in a convent – where ‘silence’ predominates – floors close carpeted, talking at a minimum – but she was led to consider just what we mean by ‘silence’.

Absence of noise and interference, opportunity to be alone with ourselves and God, she thought. However, heavy fire doors impossible to shut silently, windows not double-glazed, the cacophony of outside noise relentless, a small airport nearby, planes taking off/landing, a GPO sorting office over the road, lorries arriving/departing, an A-road roundabout, traffic moving 24/7, neighbouring gardens, chainsaws, mowers.

Kay knew that God is present in these sounds of daily life but she continued to find them an intrusion and longed for real absence of noise, increasingly hard to find.

Many people find silence disturbing and rush to fill the space with words or actions. Some have to escape as they feel oppressed and unable to be at peace within themselves. What are we trying to escape from? Maybe ourselves – seeing ourselves as we really are – as God sees us?

Those close to us know us well, but we manage to keep some parts of ourselves hidden away.

In the silence we can be honest with ourselves and allow the healing power of the Holy Spirit to assure us of God’s love and give us the strength to go on with renewed courage.

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