



[Ed. Note: At “press time” Michael is without Internet access and unable to send his reflection for February. Listening to silence is reprised from the July 2018 issue of *Buen Camino*.]

Listening to silence

Years ago, I made a retreat at Taizé, the ecumenical monastery founded by the late Br. Roger Schütz, in Burgundy, France. Three times a day, I joined thousands of young people from all over the world – shoeless, sitting in quiet stillness for 20 minutes. “Caught in stillness,” as Br. Roger would say, “cornered...held captive,” hardly a sound in the darkened Church of Reconciliation.

Since then, I have found myself in similar “corners,” stripped of everything, except silence... lying awake in a refuge on the Camino, 30 slumbering bodies around me... walking for hours after my mind had grown tired and bored... doctors’ waiting rooms, not picking up a magazine... traffic jams... five-hour flights, personal computer and iPad stowed... days stuck in a sickbed.

What is it that makes us flee silence? Are we afraid of what she might have to say? Whether it be fear, resistance, or avoidance, perhaps we need to take up the challenge of Br. Roger, and step into those everyday spaces silence offers. What *then* you may ask? Simply listen to silence and, if necessary, talk to her. I am reminded of the words from the famous Simon and Garfunkel song, *The Sound of Silence* – “Hello darkness, my old friend ¶ I’ve come to talk with you again ¶ Because a vision softly creeping ¶ Left its seeds while I was sleeping ¶

And the vision that was planted in my brain ¶ Still remains ¶ Within the sound of silence.”

Rainer Maria Rilke, in *I, 19*, speaks so beautifully of the God who is constantly trying to break through our resistance and speak to us.

Blessings, *

Michael

I, 19

I am, you anxious one.

Don’t you sense me, ready to break
into being at your touch?

My murmurings surround you
like shadowy wings.

Can’t you see me standing before you
cloaked in stillness?

Hasn’t my longing ripened in you
from the beginning
as fruit ripens on a branch?

I am the dream you are dreaming

When you want to awaken,

I am that wanting.

I grow strong in the beauty you behold,
And with the silence of stars I enfold
your cities made by time.

Rainer Maria Rilke

THE BOOK OF A MONASTIC LIFE

Follow Michael online

Michael was able to obtain the necessary EU visa documents and set off on his year-long journey. We will post occasional updates from him on the Hermit Fish website. You can keep up with Michael – under the “Travel Log” tab select “Sabbatical Journey 2020.”

<https://hermitfish.com/sabbatical-journal-2020>

Retreat recordings are a great way to get your “Michael fix”

While Michael is away, recordings of his retreats are a terrific way to stay connected. Downloads of all 13 of Michael’s retreats are available, and some titles on CD still remain. Each is a full retreat, consisting of 5 talks, totaling over 5 hours. Visit:

<https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/MichaelFish>

Retreat scheduling on hold

Michael’s schedule has been put on hold until he returns. If you are interested in booking Michael for an event, please email Laura Hipke, laura@hipkes.com. She will follow up with you after Michael is back.

Support needed for Michael

Michael is entirely self-supporting, receiving no outside financial assistance apart from his own ministry. Your tax-deductible donation to Hermit Fish, his 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, helps to sustain Michael’s ministry. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated.

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Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>

Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, enigmala.com