

On Solitude

Excerpts from the book, "Gift From the Sea"
by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

"We must re-learn to be alone. It is a difficult lesson to learn today—to leave one's friends and family and deliberately to practice the art of solitude for an hour or a day or a week. For me, the break is the most difficult. Parting is inevitably painful, even for a short time. It is like an amputation I feel. A limb is being torn off, without which I shall be unable to function. And yet, once it is done, I find that there is a quality to being alone that is incredibly precious. Life rushes back into the void, richer and more vivid, fuller than before. It is as if in silence and solitude a person did actually lose an arm. And then, like the starfish, that person grows anew, that person is whole again, complete and round, more whole, even than before when the other people had pieces of that person." (page 42)

"Yes, I felt closer to my fellowmen, too, even in my solitude. For it is not physical solitude that actually separates one from other men, not physical isolation, but spiritual isolation. It is not the desert island nor the stony wilderness that cuts you from the people you love. It is the wilderness in the mind, the desert wastes in the heart through which one wanders lost and a stranger. When one is a stranger to oneself, then one is estranged from others too. If one is out of touch with oneself, then one cannot touch others. How often in a large city shaking hands with friends, I have felt the wilderness stretching between us. Both of us were wandering in arid wastes, having lost the springs that nourished us—or having found them dry. I am beginning to discover only when a person is connected to one's core is a person connected to others. And, for me, the core, the inner spring, can best be re-found through solitude" (pages 43-44)

"As far as the search for solitude is concerned, we live in a negative atmosphere as invisible, as all-pervasive, and as enervating as high humidity on an August afternoon. The world today does not understand, in either man or woman, the need to be alone.

"How inexplicable it seems. Anything else will be accepted as a better excuse. If a person sets aside some time for a business appointment, a trip to the hairdresser, a special engagement, or a shopping expedition, that time is accepted as inviolable. But if a person says: 'I cannot come because it is my hour to be alone,' that person is considered rude, egotistical or strange. What a commentary on our civilization, when being alone is considered suspect, when a person has to apologize for it, make excuses, hide the fact that one practices solitude like a secret vice!

"Actually, these are among the most important times in a person's life—when one is alone. Certain springs are tapped only when we are alone. The artist knows he must be alone to create; the writer, to work out his own thoughts; the musician, to compose; the saint, to pray" (pages 49-50).

*In silence our past life, memories, joys, regrets, hopes, relationships, etc. and the world around us—all is cast into another light. But be patient. Let go. Much may surface that disturbs you. It takes time for agitated water to settle and become clear. **Enter into silence so that solitude can enter into you.** In solitude life some-how is magnified. It is as if we were looking at life through a lens that allows us to see more deeply.*

*It may take time before we see more clearly—to realize that we were never alone.
The Spirit speaks in silence and moves subtly but always breathing hope, healing, life, and joy.*

"Come Holy Spirit; enkindle in me the Fire of your Love!"