

May 7th, 2020 Daily Devotional:

I've decided that there's something about the efficiency and openness and emotional complexity of poetry that seems especially made for a time when I find it harder to focus for a long stretch of reading, my thoughts are a bit more jumbled, and my emotions are so disparate.

Denise Levertov is a poet who was introduced to me in seminary. This poem of hers is titled "Making Peace":

A voice from the dark called out,

"The poet must give us

imagination of peace, to oust the intense, familiar
imagination of disaster. Peace, not only
the absence of war.'

But peace, like a poem,
is not there ahead of itself,
can't be imagined before it is made,
can't be known except
in the words of its own making,
grammar of justice,
syntax of mutual aid.

A feeling towards it,
dimly sensing a rhythm, is all we have
until we begin to utter its metaphors,
learning them as we speak.

A line of peace might appear
if we restructured the sentence our lives are making,
revoked its reaffirmation of profit and power,
questioned our needs, allowed
long pauses . . .

A cadence of peace might balance its weight
on that different fulcrum; peace, a presence,
an energy field more intense than war,
might pulse then,
stanza by stanza into the world,
each act of living

one of its words, each word
a vibration of light--facets
of the forming crystal.
-Denise Levertov

I'm challenged by the idea that peace is not something "ahead of itself"--not known until it is made. And then this:
A line of peace might appear
if we restructured the sentence our lives are making,
revoked its reaffirmation of profit and power,
questioned our needs, allowed
long pauses . . .

This pandemic is exposing so many ways that we've reaffirmed profit and power in the collective sentences of our lives--and so many people are suffering. What do we need to restructure *now* so that going forward a line of peace might appear? How does this "long pause" give us the opportunity to truly bring peace, stanza by stanza, by each act of our living, into the world for *everyone*?

Let us pray, using poetic words from our hymnal (the Prayer of St. Francis):
Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord,
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.
Amen.