
The Still, Small Voice of God



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by the Rev. Canon George Maxwell
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Wow! Homecoming was great. We heard a wonderful sermon, celebrated the Eucharist together, and gathered in Child Hall for the annual ministry fair. It was not hard to sense the presence of the Spirit in the smiling faces and eager conversations that greeted the new program year. It reminded me of the way that the first day of the second year of school offers a fresh start on a familiar path.

I had another feeling this year, though.

I was eager to get back to church, but I had found something over the summer that I didn't want to lose. We went back to Maine over the summer (which is well documented on Facebook!). We rented the same little cottage that we stayed in last summer, attended the summer chapel that has come to feel like home, renewed our friendships with people from all over the country who come back to this island every year, and made some new friends too!

The pace of life slowed to what is affectionately known as "Island Time."

Things often take longer than you anticipate on Island Time. If the bridge has swung open to allow a boat to pass through, then your trip to town is going to take longer than you thought. If the wind dies down or the fog rolls in, then your outing on the sailboat is going to be the only thing you do that afternoon. If the otherwise helpful salesperson at LL Bean sells you the wrong kind of pump for your inflatable kayak, then your paddling adventure is going to have to wait the day that it takes you to drive back to the store to get the right one!

It's too much to say that this change of pace is radically transforming, but it does slow your roll. It invites you to work a little more being into your doing. I find that I'm more interested in watching wildlife on the water than sports on the screen. Fiction replaces nonfiction on my bedside table and silence replaces the podcast voices in the car. I even begin to let go of my regret over things that have happened in the past and my anxiety about things that might happen in the future.

It is freeing and refreshing. I feel like the bull that has found the safe place at the center of the ring they call the querencia. It is a place of wholeness and strength. There is no need to run. I feel calm and peaceful. From here, I can see that the matador of life has been trying to keep me from finding this inner sanctuary.

I am eager to start the new program year, but I don't want to lose the center I have found. Maybe you feel this way too? It would be a shame for us to come back from vacation with our batteries recharged only to resume living our lives in the same way as we were before we left.

I'm not sure what to tell you. I have a library of books that talk about all of this, most of which I have read. They have a lot to say about how to find and hold onto our center. They are clear that it is only in faithful being that we can see the doing clearly.

I am reminded, though, that Elijah didn't find God in the great and strong wind, the earthquake, or the fire. When Elijah heard God, it was in a still, small voice.

I think I'll start by trying to walk from my car to the church each morning without looking at my phone!