

For all people...

Beloved person,

In the context of Peace Week, over the past weeks the writers of the Weekly Letters brought to our attention the theme: *Doing nothing is not an option*. Or, in other words: *Doing* something is an option. They invited us to live according to our foundation. Not waiting but starting ourselves *and* not just the ideal of nurturing peace, but giving it stature in the small steps of everyday life. In the way we speak, listen, deal with differences and care for each other.

I sense how complicated this can sometimes be in the unruly reality of life. Although I try to live from out of my faith, I sometimes disappoint people, fail to understand someone properly or react differently to how, looking back, I would have liked. Connection then can sometimes come under stress and peace can seem far away. And I wish:

*For all the people who struggle with broken connections and so long for rapprochement:
may there be gentleness.*

Occasionally I struggle to keep peace in my own heart, to not be too hard on myself, to not be stuck in recrimination or judgement of others. To continue to see the person behind the behaviour that affects me. And I pray:

*For all the people who long for inner peace but are unable to find it:
may there be mildness.*

Sometimes there are situations where you would like to find connection, while the other person is not ready for it. There is then sometimes little more to be done than to learn to accept it. Sometimes love consists of waiting, of giving space, and waiting out your powerlessness.

*For all the people who long for reconciliation, but must live with a closed door:
may there be strength to bear this.*

Even though I see the effects that the efforts of countless peace workers have, to be honest there are also days when I lose heart. When I see how much violence, hate and destruction there is in the world. Sometimes I think: what does my contribution actually amount to?

*For all the people who sometimes feel powerless against all the suffering in the world:
know that you are not the only one who sometimes feels empty handed to work against it.*

A new choir song has been written for perhaps just these moments. Not to deny the suffering, not to negate the feelings of powerlessness, but to remind ourselves – sometimes getting ahead of ourselves – that besides all the dark forces, something else is also active. Something that is gentle, remains loyal and never allows itself to be discouraged.

*It is the root that splits the asphalt.
the stone saint that is worn smooth
by years of caressing.
They who nurture can cause the roughest
substance to disappear,
but never alone, never suddenly.*

*It takes years of tenderness,
endlessly repeating small tokens of peace,
of which not one is lost.
Every loving gesture contributes to the
movement.*

*Even when war penetrates deeply in language,
words explode around us,
further away the bombs,
the soft powers will win,
without defeating anything.*

*It is the warmth in our body
that finds its way to the outside,
it is the law upon which life revolves.
The slowly moving power of love.¹*

That is why I want to continue to participate, knowing myself to be carried by the faith that we do this together. Not with the conviction that everything will turn out fine, but because this is the good and meaningful thing to do, regardless of the outcome.² In the belief that not a single loving gesture is lost.

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your brother,
Marten van der Wal



Attention for those who have gone before us

¹ Song 86, choir: *The soft forces* (freely translated)

² Based on the poem *Hope*, Vaclav Havel