

October 15, 2001

- *Authentic listening*

God is with each of you in your individual needs. The response that each of you seeks from God is already apparent. It is indeed a time in the world characterized by great turmoil, and again you ask, "Where do we find God? What can we do? What has happened to the life we thought we knew?" Such concerns are shared by all. It is these concerns that have made the human world smaller. Whether one lives in a region of the world free of military war, or in a location that is characterized by military activity, you are all united by your sense of uncertainty, the sense of fear, a sense of helplessness, and the constant questioning of where God is.

The events of the past month have brought all closer. When you are brought into a tighter sense of shared vulnerability, you are also given a gift. The gift is that of listening. It is easy to complain and to question and to tremble, but all of these reactions are directed outward. The ultimate resolution that shall bring peace is when humankind is brought so close to one another that you are forced to listen to what the other has to say. Two strangers who live across town may know and acknowledge that the other exists, but when you are in a small space with many others and you are brought together in close proximity, you begin to talk, and in talking you begin to listen. Each of you has experienced this in the past. When you are faced with similar dilemmas and you find yourself close to strangers, you begin to converse. You begin, not just to talk, but to listen.

The peace you seek is a peace of listening. When you listen, you learn to understand another. You cannot dwell entirely on your own difficulties. For much of the world at this moment, there is precious little listening. National leaders of all persuasions are anxious to be heard, but no one bothers to really listen to what is being meant. The time will come, have no fear, that you all will be brought to a position of listening. Why are positions being taken as they are? Why are attitudes being expressed as they are? Why do others have fear? When listening commences, understanding is the result. This concept is so important on a global level, but it is extremely important to be exercised on a person to person level. You seek peace in the world, and yet often you do too little to achieve peace between individuals.

You are, in truth, one another's keeper. You are, in truth, in part responsible for the benefit, the growth, the nurturing of another. Each of you, each of the totality of humankind, is so involved and absorbed with the needs of self that barriers are constructed that are defensive in posture when what is needed are bridges. It is incumbent upon each person to find ways in your daily living that allow you to listen deeply and penetratingly to another human being. It is not common for you to sit down with another and just be—just be present, listen to what another is motivated to express.

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It takes great courage to listen. Listening is an active, not a passive, response. You listen to what another says, but you must, more importantly, listen to what another means. Words in themselves can be so empty. It is the thought behind those words that you must get to.

With so many activities dominating your normal everyday human lives, there seems at times not to be enough hours in the day to be absorbed in another human being. You know of your spiritual connectedness, one with another, but this connectedness must lead somewhere. It is not enough merely to acknowledge that you and another being share the same spiritual source, the same genesis, the same route. That knowledge must lead toward action—action of listening, action of understanding.

When you respond to another with compassion, you are listening. When you respond with compassion, you are not responding merely to what another says, but rather to your perception of that person's needs. Think of the times you have responded compassionately towards someone who never expressed those needs in words. You felt motivated to reach out, to guide, to comfort, to support. It was never asked for. You were listening to that person.

It takes courage to listen, for you are being taken away from that which you know the best, namely yourselves. It is a safe harbor to be centered upon the self. There are risks of storms when you head for open water. When you become sensitive to what may be out there, you run the risk of being swamped, of being overwhelmed from the challenges that may await. Moving away from self takes vision, and above all, faith. Moving out into those open waters requires a committed belief that you are safe, that you are strong, that you are able to meet all that comes your way.

Some individuals find themselves overwhelmed when they listen. Some find themselves unable to respond as they feel they should. When you listen to another, do so with prayer—prayer for the one you listen to, but also prayer for your own openness that welcomes God's strength, God's guiding light and supportive warmth. Listening internationally means being committed to listening on an individual basis. You cannot listen at a distance if you are unable to listen to your neighbor. You are united, but that unity does not guarantee that you will automatically hear what is being said, what is being meant, what is being felt. That is an effort that you must make as individuals committed to living life guided by the presence of God.

Loving is listening in its most intense expression. If you truly love another, you are listening. If you truly love another, it is impossible not to hear. Love can be described as a kind of spiritual, purposeful listening. You cannot love what you don't know. You can love what you don't see, but yet know to be there. A child in a darkened room can love the parents who are in another room. You can love the presence of God, yet you cannot see that presence. You know it is there. Listening, therefore, is the ultimate act of love.

You cannot express yourself with anger and yet be listening. When you listen, there is no anger. Anger does not exist on the plate that is filled with love. You may

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disagree with individuals whom you love, but that is different from anger. That is different from wishing emotional or physical pain. The individuals who crafted the recent terror and continue to find ways to inflict fear are not acting out of a love for God. They are not listening to God. They are not listening to humankind. They are the ones who are figuratively dominated by the need to speak—speaking with words, speaking through actions. There is no listening taking place.

Equally true is the response of many to the horrors of the present through the infliction of more fear, more terror. Those individuals whose decision it is to act with aggression are in a speaking mode; they are not listening. But all individuals are eventually shown the wisdom of listening. When there is a disagreement between you and another person and both of you are willing to hear honestly what the other is expressing, the anger is completely dissipated. The energy directed against another ceases completely. The opportunity for reconciliation and peace is present.

You may ask what can you do to bring about the peace you seek. Start with one another and allow that relationship to be a demonstration, to be a witness to others of what listening can achieve. It serves no purpose to complain about the behaviors of others when it is so easy to be guilty of the same offenses oneself.

Our influence on your lives is through your listening. It is through your ability to quiet the chatter within. It is through your collective ability to be open to your guides. All of your guides are assembled together, as you are assembled together. As you listen, you also are becoming more sensitive to one another. This growing relationship must be nurtured by your commitment.

We urge upon you the necessity of being willing to leave the safe harbor. Be willing to risk yourselves for the benefit of another. Move into territory that is unfamiliar with the expressed purpose of understanding, not of imposition. The relationships that develop because of your ability to listen will be strengthened, given meaning and purpose, direction, and be given also a vision of unity. Accept that you are spiritually a single unit, but accept also the reality that such union requires your ability to hear, to be present, to be supportive, to be compassionate. Give of yourself. Walk the extra distance if it means comfort for another. Understand what another needs even when it is not expressed. Look into their eyes and become for a moment that other person. You will then be empowered to hear the great resonance of the spiritual union vibrating in peace and tranquility.

You are blessed as you walk among one another. You are blessed as you walk beneath the brilliance of God. You are blessed by your capacity to be open. We, in turn, are blessed by your prayers and your willingness to be open to our reflection of God's overpowering light and constant presence. Rejoice in those blessings! They are shared by all. Live by them; be guided by them.

Amen.