**Wellsprings of Stillness**

At first this may seem a bit of a contradiction, to link the idea of moving water (as in a spring) with the concept of stillness! But I would like to share some ways in which I have been much helped by this surprising but nevertheless powerful imagery.

Some time ago a dear friend gave me a beautiful stone on which she had inscribed the words: ‘**Fountain** of Stillness’. Next to that stone I have placed an icon portraying the moment when Jesus talks with the woman of Samaria at the well, and says to her:

 ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ (John 4:13-14)

 (Icon by the late John Coleman, for the Association for Promoting Retreats)

Also, on one of the first retreats I ever attended, the leader spoke about how we can dip into the underlying **stream** of God’s silent presence, flowing beneath all our surface activities, at any moment. All these years later I am still learning, and re-learning, how to engage with that!

Finally, there’s the idea of the ‘**pool of silence’** in which we can immerse ourselves when we pray. This is not a brackish or stagnant pool, but is constantly replenished by hidden, fresh-flowing streams.

In all of these water-related images, the silence and stillness that they convey are not our achievement, let alone our possession, but are God’s gift to us.

**So, to lead us into silence**, here are some lines I once wrote in another context:

As we plunge into the clear, tranquil pool of prayer,

the Holy Spirit permeates us

with abundant grace,

refreshing us with the quiet surprise of deep peace.

**At the end of the silence**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.

He feeds me in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. Psalm 23 vv. 1-3a