

What are you Seeking?

(Letter from Taizé 2026, Brother Matthew)

Every year, thousands of young people come to Taizé during the summer months (older people come at other times but are asked to give young people priority in July and August). They join with the Community's Prayer three times a day, are given a daily Bible study and then time in small groups sharing their thoughts and experiences. Each year, the Prior writes a letter which is a basis for these bible studies and discussions. Some extracts from this letter are offered to reflect on in our time of silence this evening.



Will you come and follow me if I but
call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and
never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
Will you let my name be known?
Will you let my life be grown in you
And you in me?



So many people are looking for meaning in their lives. They are searching for something greater than the easy promises that fill our screens so much of the time. Are humans not created for a real purpose? What can enable us to discover this?

When we try to live from the trusting of faith we sometimes ask ourselves: What does God want of me? We have so many desires. Which is the path I can walk with God?

During the past year, we have received visits at Taizé from young people from Ukraine, Palestine, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Myanmar and other places where war and conflict are rife. Their faith and their longing for just and lasting peace have been an inspiration to us. We have also heard the testimonies of people working in Gaza or with family living there. We can see the pain of those whose loved ones have been held hostage and hear the cries of those seeking justice under oppressive regimes. Our world has so much beauty, but so much injustice too. What is my place in all of that? What am I being asked to do? This is the question which I often feel in my heart, faced with the complexity of life and the choices with which I am confronted.

In John's Gospel, the first words of Jesus are "What are you seeking?" I shared this question with a group of six young volunteers in Taizé from six different countries spread over four continents. What follows is inspired by what they told me.

Seeking silence

After a week at Taizé, when asked what has been most important for them, many young people speak about the experience of silence. In a world which is hyperconnected and constantly on the move, this may seem surprising. When we take time and disconnect from input that never ends, it is sometimes in silence that we truly encounter ourselves and also glimpse a greater reality.



In God's beautiful creation, the sound of the wind, the babbling brook and birdsong can embrace us and lead us towards that inner silence where communion with all that exists becomes tangible. A star-filled night can fill us with wonder.*

And so this silence is not empty. It becomes a place of encounter. In silence we are not alone. But we struggle with it because our mind is filled with so many things. As it says in the Rule of Taizé, "If your attention wanders, return to prayer as soon as you notice your distraction, without lamenting over it."

Prayer is often first of all a desire, a silent longing for peace in the presence of God. When we do not know how to pray, the Holy Spirit is there, praying in us in sighs too deep for words. As we listen to that deepest part of our heart, we can realize that it is there that the Holy Spirit dwells. I am confronted with myself and with God, who is breathing in me.



Living God, teach me to seek you in the silence of my heart, in the beauty of creation, in listening to your Word, in welcoming your humble presence.

Seeking a direction

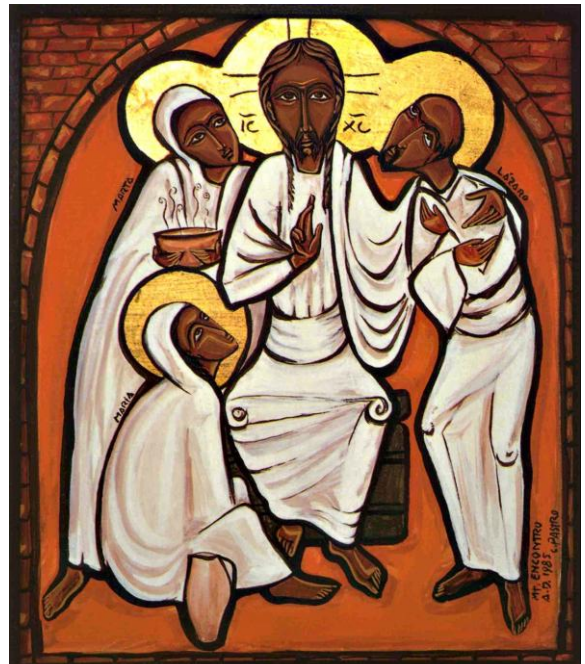
“35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” 39 He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day.

John 1. 35-39

When Jesus sees the two disciples, he asks, “What are you seeking?” When they reply, “Master, where do you live?” he tells them, “Come and you will see”.*

Those two questions sum up the process of seeking and discovering a direction for a life with Christ. Starting with our own desires, with expressions of our longing for greater life – “What are you seeking?” – we go on to confront them with the person of Jesus – “Master, where do you live?”

The Jesus who invites us to “Come and see” is gentle and humble of heart, and he loves us with a love that is unconditional, secure and unfailing. Will I dare to respond to his invitation despite my hesitations and even my doubts?



Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer in you
And you in me?

Will you let the blinded man see if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean

And do such as this unseen?

And admit to what I mean in you
And you in me?



Seeking Peace and Seeking Joy

One of the volunteers at Taizé told me, “In my country, young people try to survive in a world that offers everything; but deep within, it is fear, anxiety and depression that dominate.” We are faced with promises of joy all around us. But so many of these fail to lead to a lasting joy, and give just a short moment of pleasure.

Joy bubbles up from deep within when we realise that we are loved for who we are. When we understand that joy is a gift and not something we can claim, we can find we are ready to welcome it. Then we are no longer trying to produce it by force, and we are borne lightly forward.

We long for peace – inner peace and peace in this world which God loves so much. “Begin the work of peace within yourself, so that, once you are at peace, you can bring peace to others,”* said a believer of the 4th century.

When Jesus meets with Mary of Magdala in the garden on Easter morning, he asks her, “Why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”* Her tears turn to joy as she realises that the one she longed for has not been overcome by death. And Jesus then sends her to share what she has seen and heard with his other friends.



The peace Jesus promised before his death, a “peace which the world cannot give”,* is much more than an absence of conflict. The biblical word shalom includes the sense of restoration and wholeness. This is the peace of God entrusted to us so that we can foster and develop it.

All of us have a need to let ourselves be bathed in the peace that the Risen Christ promises each one of us. In this way we can journey together and accompany each other, sowing hope* step by step

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call
your name?
Will you quell that fear inside and never be the
same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around
Through my sight and touch and sound in you
And you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but
call my name
Let me turn and follow you and never be the
same
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you
And you in me.

Bless us, God of love. Through the Holy Spirit, always guide our steps as we walk with the Risen Christ. May we seek to become pilgrims of hope, pilgrims of peace.