

Reviews of Two Books

which the reader has found edifying personally and as a Spiritual Director

***A Book of Silence* by Sara Maitland** is both a personal story and collected material about silence and solitude. Maitland's aims were to understand silence better, to explore her own spirituality and silence as a tool for this development, to deepen her own writing, and to explore the fact that she was falling in love with silence.

Maitland pursues the idea of silence being a positive experience rather than a "lack of". I very much liked the way she referred to silence as "outwith" language rather than "without" language.

She documents eight experiences that seem common to people who spend long periods of time in solitude and silence, such as lone sailors, and does not avoid some of the darker effects of silence.

The chapter headings Growing up in a Noisy World, Forty Days and Forty Nights, The Dark Side, Silence and the Gods, Silent places, Desert Hermits, The Bliss of Solitude, Coming Home indicate the range of this book.

***When It Rains* by Maggie McKellar** (Vintage Books Australia) is a sensitively written, personal memoir of a young mother's grief following the suicide death of her husband and the death of her mother two years later. I first heard her interviewed on ABC radio and was impressed by her honesty and ability to put words around her experience. I felt this book enlarged my understanding of the grieving process.

– Mary McCowan, 2011