

ENCOURAGEMENT *ENCOURAGEMENT*

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Sound of Silence...

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Many of you will have heard the famous theme to the Film 'The Graduate' made famous by this tune, the 'Sound of Silence', as well as others. Listening recently to many voices speaking on so many issues of our time it occurred to me that we live in a world that is obsessed with noise of one kind or another. Not only are we pressed with current news and programmes of various types, all full of words, discussions, comments, but we now have the added 'bonus' if that is what it is, of media of various types. Recently visiting friends and family I heard that there was a debate as to whether to ban mobile phones in the classroom or school as students were accessing these during lessons.... And not just for academic use. The opinions were divided. Many young people simply do not know how to exist without a phone in their hands. Some go into serious panic if the phone goes missing or is unavailable for any reason.



Clearly access to information is not in itself a bad thing... Indeed, it had made us aware of things that go on all over the world and to pray and reflect upon them. Equally, used correctly it can teach us much that would take many trips to the library etc. However in all this noise and busy-ness have we lost the ability to be silent?

Silence has many attributes. It enables us to rest, to still our thoughts, to bring peace and to give us time to 'simply be' without having to make comments, judgements, or conversation. There is an expression of this that states 'Silence is golden'. I wonder how many people these days, would agree with that statement? Silence can also be constructive in the sense that it speaks louder than words... Jesus, by and large, was silent before his tormentors before the Crucifixion. Many saints too have also done this. It is also 'a right' even when convicted in a court or accused, to remain silent. All is worth pondering... Silence is a very powerful weapon indeed.

It can also bring about peace in disputes while one party listens to the other and makes no comment until less strong words are used and there is some communication. It can make us listen to each other more, and not talk over each other... Some people regained that silence during that Pandemic and liked it.

But there is a deeper silence which is perhaps more challenging, but an imperative in order to grow in faith, love and holiness. It is now rare to hear of Hermits and people dedicated to live their life in that stillness and silence which makes them actually full of wisdom, discernment and able to speak this out when needed using few words that cut to the quick. The history of the church is full of such people, often desert dwellers. Can we also remember that before 'his mission' started Jesus spent time in the desert preparing. Silence was needed for him to prepare to go out into the highways and byways proclaiming the Good News. Jesus often withdrew after speaking or healing so as to rest and be silent.

There have also been religious congregations that have been founded on the very silence and listening such as the Carmelites, the Trappist Cistercian and indeed many communities have a period of silence built into their daily schedules.

But how and why does this silence lead to holiness? We are all bidden to pray. We are bidden to pray continuously. This can be done in so many different formats, rosaries, set prayer, prayers of intercession prayers used by Saints and of course Eucharistic prayer, but a vital prayer is that of Silence. All prayer is a 'Raising up of the mind and heart to God' (Catechism definition and teaching). Vocal prayer or even mental prayer does this of course... but being silent and listening is crucial to our ability to...

"Listen in silence, because if your heart is full of other things you cannot hear the voice of God." St. Teresa of Calcutta

hear the word of God in our heart and minds. If we are continually noisy, we cannot hear the 'still small voice' that speaks to us continually, clarifies and guides us. Silence encourages us to listen to the prompting of the Spirit and the Voice of the Lord. It may not form in words but in conviction. It may be through being led to a book or someone who can help us, but without silence we will not be able to be guided. Sometimes this voice comes in the form of locutions or specific words given to us. Again, many people experience this. Sometimes it simply opens us to receive a blessing or courage to speak out when necessary... Prophets are often people who have learnt to listen to that voice and reflect it to others.

The word 'Poustinia' may not be familiar to many. The word means 'desert or wilderness.' It is an Eastern European word. It is however a very important word. It was made more familiar to the world through the writings of Venerable Catherine Doherty and others. It is a place of aloneness with God, not just a place of rest (though it can be this as well). Her book by this name spells out its purpose and aims beautifully. It prepares us to be still, listen and reveals to us who we are, and gives us heart to take that stillness into the Marketplace, or our ordinary lives. It prepares us, if so called, to serve in whatever capacity is required of us. This is not just for 'religious' but it is a resource for all of us. There are in many places rooms set apart for this purpose in communities as well and homes.

Time spent in silence even a few hours can bring many blessings. Even a few minutes set aside in each busy day can start us on that journey. There are people who chose to do this maybe once a month, for say 24 hours at a time. There are still today people who spend most of their time in Poustinia, sometime in that aloneness, sometimes writing. Madonna House community in Combermere, Canada has such Poustinias available for its members when needed or called into it. There are a few in England too, those who have tried it found it a time of great illumination and growth. But if this does not appeal to you then do not discount the idea of profound silence with God, One place that this is possible if of course before the Blessed Sacrament or with Scripture. Developing a practice of 'Silence' can lead us to get to know God better...

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This also allows us to listen to each other in the silence so bringing peace and friendship The guidance of God is perfect... instead of seeking comfort in words or fast moving images, seek it in silence. You will gain more than any words... Try it a few times; you may be surprised.

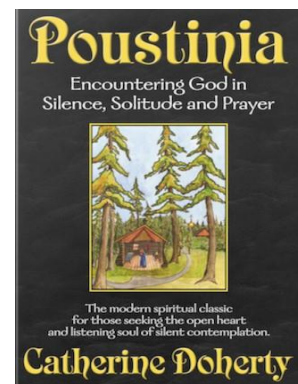
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Papal Quote

"One aspect that we must foster in our communities with greater commitment is the experience of silence. We need silence if we are to accept in our hearts the full resonance of the voice of the Holy Spirit and to unite our personal prayer more closely to the Word of God and the public voice of the Church. In a society that lives at an increasingly frenetic pace, often deafened by noise and confused by the ephemeral, it is vital to rediscover the value of silence. The spread, also outside Christian worship of practices of meditation that give priority to recollection is not accidental. Why not start with... daring a specific education...? Let us keep before our eyes the example of Jesus, who "rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed". St. John Paul II, 2004

"Go into your room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in the Secret Place."

~ Jesus



Feast Days in November

- 1st All Saints' Day
- 2nd All Souls' Day
- 3rd St. Winefride
- 4th St. Charles Borromeo
- 5th 31st Sunday in Ord. Time
- 10th Pope St. Leo the Great
- 9th Dedication of the Lateran Basilica
- 11th St. Martin of Tours
- 12th 32nd Sunday in Ord. Time
- 16th St. Margaret of Scotland
- 19th 33rd Sunday in Ord. Time (A)
- 21st Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 22nd St. Cecilia
- 24th The Martyrs of Vietnam
- 25th St. Catherine of Alexandria
- 26th Our Lord Jesus Christ. The King
- 30th St. Andrew, Apostle

