

Silence of love Leads to the Love of Silence

This reflection is a modest attempt to cast a glance of love on the subject of S I L E N C E. Like the beam of light from a lighthouse, these few thoughts point to and try to illuminate this “guardian of all observances”.

We should keep in mind that the silence of which we speak here is the ‘silence born of love’ not fear. Silence can lead us to light, knowledge and love of God and neighbor but it can also be the effect, the result of fear - fear of truth about ourselves, about others. A certain cold silence can even be used as a form of punishment towards one who has wronged us. Human respect is a form of fear which often leaves one silent, when in fact, he ought to speak. Silence, induced by fear, needs to be broken, *by love*, in order to set the mind and heart free.

But the ‘silence born of love’ is our subject here. The silence of love which, the Holy Spirit, and He alone, imparts by uniting a person with Eternal Love.

From this gift of the ‘silence of love’, the WORD, Who is Love, is born!

As Dominicans we learn very early that our holy Father St. Dominic “spoke only of God or to God”. On a journey he would say to the Brothers: “Let us ponder on our Saviour”. He told his brothers also at the end of his life using the words of St. Paul: “Imitate me as I have imitated Christ”. *And so we are called to imitate St. Dominic as he imitated Christ!* Today as you are in the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament let us reflect a few minutes on the Silence of Christ which St. Dominic imitated so well and thus became *the* Preacher of Grace. Christ Himself is the Teacher par excellence of the Love of Silence.

In all of Scripture during the first thirty years of His life, we have only one sentence of JESUS’. This was spoken to His parents Mary and Joseph in the presence of the doctors of the Law: “*Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?*” At the age of twelve in these few words Christ proclaims His mission. And as His followers – like St. Dominic – we too must be about our Father’s business!

After those thirty years His public Preaching began – the Divine Word began to speak. That silent hidden life prepared the Way for the intense life of preaching and teaching that would culminate in the Paschal Mystery of our Redemption. So too, with St. Dominic. He was often found in the church praying, adoring, praising and blessing Our Saviour. And at times, the profound depth of his silent, prayerful union with the Saviour broke forth with groans and tears as he pleaded for the conversion of poor sinners.

Silence and Listening go together: “*St. Dominic hears God’s word in silence. His silence nourishes his words. Silence and speech are brother and sister. They carry each others burdens. St. Dominic listens and is silent so that his words may become tender and may heal. In this way he reaches out to the light so as to carry it into the darkness of human lives. In silence he can bear God’s silence. He learns the silence of love which nourishes his silence and his words.*”

(Fr. Vladimir Koudelka, O.P. “*St Dominic’s Prayer Postures*”, Dominican Ashram, vol. 18, Dec. 1999)



It is in silent communing with God that we discover our true dignity as sons and daughters of the Father. We come to know ourselves, our own “i am” in the Divine “I AM”. Silence therefore, is a friend of the friends of God.

Every time we go apart – as Christ did and St Dominic too – to PRAY in silence communing with the Father we hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God. The example of JESUS’ Silence is for us the ultimate...in the moment of His Passion, through the merciless scourging and the crowning with thorns and along the way carrying *our* Cross He spoke not until He met the women on the way...and through the nailing of His Sacred hands and feet still He spoke not.

Finally, after all that silence along the way, we learn from the Gospel His parting words from the height of the Cross.

The silence of humility...JESUS’ teaches us the power of humble silence in the most abject circumstances of life. He understood perfectly the reason for His suffering...and He said YES to the Father...His silence in His Passion was the fruit of His continual communion with the Father and His will. We, on the other hand, cry out in pain i.e. complaint etc in trials because we do not yet understand the reason for suffering...the mercy of suffering. We do not yet see with the eyes of God - that is, with the pure eyes of Faith.

And today, where is Christ? He remains hidden, SILENT in the Tabernacle of our Churches. The One Who is all powerful, all knowing allows Himself to be “imprisoned” in the Tabernacle. And He is before you now exposed in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar. He is REAL in the Blessed Sacrament...our behaviour in His Presence has to witness to our belief... in His Presence and when we receive Him into our souls at the Eucharist our behaviour and our attitude have to proclaim: I BELIEVE! The priest who celebrates the Mass preaches in the silence of his gestures, his manner of praying the prayers everyday...no drama is required only that silent reverence expressed in an unhurried pace so that the prayers of the Mass are indeed prayed.

I said earlier that silence is the friend of the friends of God. We must also be aware that silence is the foe of our infernal foe. Why? Today, many unwittingly fill the space of their hearts and minds with so much action and “communication” i.e. texting and twittering and blogging...etc what space is there left for the silence of Love...what space is there for God? This jungle of com-motion within, delights the enemy of our immortal soul because he knows that the more we fill our lives – our hearts and minds with “talk” the less space and freedom there is for God.

“If you love truth, be a lover of silence. Silence, like the sunlight will illuminate you in God and will deliver you from the phantoms of ignorance. Silence will unite you to God Himself..

More than all things love silence: it brings you a fruit that tongue cannot describe. In the beginning we have to force ourselves to be silent. But then there is born something that draws us to silence. May God give you an experience of this “something” that is born of silence. If only you practice this, untold light will dawn on you in consequence...after a while a certain sweetness is born in the heart of this exercise and the body is drawn almost by force to remain in silence.”

(Isaac of Nineveh, a Syrian Monk)

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Oh! Maria, Woman of silence, pray for us!