

Days of Silence... in the Desert with Jesus!

Without the silence that precedes it, speech runs the great risk of being useless chattering instead: “In quietness and in trust shall be your strength,” Isaiah said. (Is 30:15) The prophet rebukes the people of Israel for their idolatrous activism, their turbulent political passions, made up of alliances based on interests or military strategy, sometimes with Egypt, sometimes with Assyria. The people of Israel no longer place their trust in God. Isaiah calls them to conversion, calm, and serenity. Thus, silence has a role connected with faith in God. Setting aside agitation and subterfuges, we must throw ourselves silently into God’s arms. Man’s hope and strength lie in his silent wager on God. ...Our future is in God’s hands and not in the noisy agitation of human negotiations, even if they may appear useful. Even today, our pastoral strategies without any demands, without an appeal to conversion, without a radical return to God, are paths that lead nowhere. They are politically correct games that cannot lead us to the crucified God, our true Liberator.



*Work of George
MacDonald*

(Robert Cardinal Sarah, *THE POWER OF SILENCE*, Against the Dictatorship of Noise, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2017, Page 40, #34.)

The Gospels recount the Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan when the heavens opened and the dove descended upon Jesus and a voice from heaven declared, “**This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.**” (Mt 3:17) This manifestation of Christ’s divinity inaugurates His public life and mission for our redemption. The Spirit then led Jesus into the desert to prepare for battle with Satan who holds mankind captive to sin. Jesus’ only weapon is the sword of Truth!

What an ambiguous place the desert is! It first appears as barren and lifeless, yet many a saint has found in the silence and solitude and emptiness of the desert the greatest food for the soul, the deepest confrontation with the self, and a most fulfilling encounter with the living God dwelling in the very depths of his or her own being. The radical purification that comes from detachment to material things and the desires of the flesh heightens the sensitivities of the soul to spiritual truth and the ultimate Reality that is God Himself. Most of us live on the surface of life, too afraid to enter into the desert experience, to be alone in the caves or to climb the mountains within ourselves where Truth confronts us and where God waits, like a Lover, to tryst with our hearts. Like Moses, we will be transfigured and transformed by the Divine Fire that consumes but does not destroy. As Moses was ordained to lead God’s people out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land, so Jesus is ordained to lead all mankind from slavery to sin into a new and supernatural life of sanctifying grace and the Indwelling Presence of God. We are called to be more than our natural selves before God. With our world and our church in so much turmoil, we, both as individuals and as a people, must heed Isaiah’s warning to keep our trust in God, and Cardinal Sarah’s wisdom to silently throw ourselves into the arms of God, wagering our future on Him and not on any merely human power. God alone is Lord over every nation and every life. He had the first Word, and He has the last word on everything. His Will is the only one that matters and we must choose to obey it.

In the message of Our Lady of America we are constantly reminded of that great gift of God, the restoration to mankind of the supernatural gifts lost to us by Adam's sin, but the new Adam, Jesus, brings gifts that far transcend those of the first Adam. Jesus gives us the sanctifying grace of the Indwelling Presence of the Most Holy Trinity in the temple of our souls and a share in the very life of the Most Holy Trinity. Raoul Plus, S.J. quotes Mgr. de Segur in these words:

All Christians know vaguely, and in theory, that God dwells within their hearts; that they are the temples of Jesus Christ, and that the Holy Ghost abides with them. ...How is it that so few people seem to attach any importance to it—that so few think of it, live in it, or have any practical belief at all in it? I am not afraid to say that even among priests—good priests—there are but few who actually feed their flocks on this precious food for which alone they crave, which alone can satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst for God, the life of their souls, the treasure of their hearts, the companion of their lives, the intimate source of their strength, their sanctification, and their piety. ...

(Raoul Plus, S.J., *GOD WITHIN US*, New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1942, Pgs. 5-6.)

On August 5, 1957, Our Lady spoke to Sister Mary Ephrem about this doctrine of the Divine Indwelling, the doctrine of sanctifying grace, God dwelling within our souls.

It was her life and she lived it perfectly, always conscious of His presence, never forgetting that all her greatness came from within, from Him Who dwelt there, working, loving, and doing good through her. This is what Our Lady means when she speaks of reformation, renewal. It is this about which she is so concerned, namely, sanctification from within. ...She seemed anxious to impress me with some idea of the greatness of this gift of God to us, namely, His Divine Presence within our souls through sanctifying grace.

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, *Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA*, Tiffin, OH, Pg. 18.)

These passages vividly remind us of Our Lady's appearance to Sister Neuzil as she really and truly was, the Immaculate Tabernacle of the Indwelling God, as shown in the image to the right, Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him Who dwells within. They remind us of St. Joseph's revelation to Sister of what he called the "Secret of Secrets" of the Divine Indwelling, a grace that few are privileged to know deeply but a secret offered to all. It was certainly offered to Sister and so very well received.



Lent is a time for penance, self-examination, prayer, fasting and almsgiving in atonement for sin, but how much more efficacious would it be for our holiness if we spent forty days, not looking at ourselves but pondering the magnitude of God's love for us. How much more effective if we went into the desert with Jesus and lay our head upon His Heart just to listen to it beat, beat, with an endless rhythm of eternal love for us!

Child, you have not yet understood. You have but glanced at my life, and at all I have bestowed on you. The manger was for you. My hidden life was for you, and the gospel which I preached. My church and her sacraments are for you. Have you never caught a glimpse of the great shadow that lay over all this—the dark, yet glimmering shadow of the two rough-hewn limbs of the cross of Calvary?

At Bethlehem I had nothing. On the Cross I had nothing. During all the years between I had nothing. ...Moreover, think on this: that no sooner was I born than one—Herod—sought my death, and more than once, when I was preaching, men would have seized me, and cast me into prison. They took up stones, to stone me. They returned my kindness with insults. ...There was desertion, hatred, and treason. Nothing was spared me. ... I chose suffering. I chose the Cross. I chose to give the last drop of my blood. Why? In order to bring home to you the inestimable value I place on that supernatural life for which your soul was made. I annihilated myself. I reduced myself to nothing, in order that God might dwell within you. I reduced myself to the *minimum* in order that you might reach the *maximum*.



I had given my life's blood, and in vain. ...He who first betrayed me, the unfortunate Judas, is the type and model of these souls who refuse to be won. I tried by every means to touch his heart. I tried kindness, compassion, threats. I went on my knees before him. I washed his feet. He did not understand. He would not take heed to my voice. At last I could but leave him to his fate. I gave my last drop of blood. Was it not enough? To me it seemed enough, but man has baffled me. Can it be thus that man's heart is made? (Raoul, Pages 19-21.)

How can we refuse Jesus anything when He has done so much for us? And all He asks is that we choose to listen to Him and let Him work His wonders within us. In a 1957 letter Sister shares Christ's words, both loving and sad, to her:

My little white dove, spouse of My Heart, if souls only understood Me better. I would teach them, if only they would come and ask. See, I hold out to them My Heart of love. Oh, if they would only come, they would no longer be cold and tepid. Close to My Heart they would partake of Its flames and themselves be wholly on fire.

This call is, above all, to My chosen ones. I expect much of them because I have given them much. How few there are, even of these, who respond with their whole hearts to My call of love. Alas, My dear spouse, even My chosen, My beloved ones, have forgotten how to love. Instead, they have come to love themselves, seeking satisfaction in their own pride and vain glory, to the detriment of their own souls and those who live about them and look to them for spiritual aid. ...

If the world is cold, My sweet spouse, My lovely one, it is because My chosen are not on fire. If there is no peace among men, it is because peace has gone even from the hearts of My chosen. My little one, you grieve because so few love as they ought. Think then what grief filled My Sacred Heart, when, during My Passion, I saw how little return I would receive for all the love I would pour out with My Blood. Oh, ingratitude of man, how long must I bear with you? You have already broken My Heart. Will you still refuse Me the small return of love that I ask?

How we need to confess our lowliness with Sister and beg our dear Lord's help.

O Life, O Beatitude, O Heaven, You only delight of the soul. You who reach down from Your high celestial throne to gather unto Yourself the little ones of this earth and in recompense for the slight sufferings they bear out of love for You, give them Yourself. Look down, I beseech You, upon this, the smallest of Your small ones and have compassion on my extreme weakness and frailty, known even more to You than to myself, and make me entirely Yours.

Copyright© Our Lady of America Devotion, Tiffin, Ohio, February 20, 2024.
All rights reserved.

We are a group of faithful Catholics who knew Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil personally and are dedicated to promoting and protecting the purity, integrity and entirety of her message as Our Lady gave it to Sister and as Sister gave it to us.