

Forty 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.

(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 gift of grace lost to us by Adam's sin, that gift of living in the state of grace which sanctifies us with the Indwelling Presence of God, the Divine Guest Who dwells in the temple of our souls. 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. ...

[Quoting words of our Lord to a Marist priest] Devotion to my Sacred Heart has certainly spread rapidly. It consoles me, and is the means of bringing many souls to me, the Savior of souls! How little understood, nevertheless, are the infinite treasures of my heart! Ah! did they but guess how intense is my desire to unite myself intimately with *each* one of them! Very few are they that attain to this union as completely as my heart has prepared it for them on earth! And what is lacking to bring this to pass?

To gather together, and to pile up, as it were, their affections, and to concentrate them on me, who am there, in the inmost recesses of their souls! Ah! cry out to them all how much I love them, implore them to lend ear to the urgent appeal of my heart, my tender invitation to descend *into the depths of their souls*, there to unite themselves with me, so to speak, and then—what blessings will I not promise them! This mysterious and divine union will be the beginning of a life which will be sanctified and fruitful to a degree never before experienced by them.

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

These passages vividly remind us of Our Lady's appearance to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil as the Immaculate Tabernacle of the Indwelling God in the image of Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him Who dwells within. (shown above) 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.

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 and let 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?

Earthly happiness might have been my portion, but I did not desire it. *Blessed are the poor* was the gospel I came to preach. Had riches been mine, would you not have said to me” “Where is your example?” Therefore I chose poverty. At Bethlehem I had nothing. On the Cross I had nothing. During all the years between I had nothing. I might have been honoured, but I desired to be able to say: *blessed are they that are persecuted* without incurring your reproach. 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. As for the Passion—there were Annas, Caiphas, another Herod, Pilate, the jeering Jews. 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*. Alas! What bankruptcy, what failure has been my portion! All this I did for men, and how many men pay heed to it? How much do the majority of them care for the divine life which is—or might be—theirs? Sin is everywhere indulged in—in streets, in houses, upstairs and down, yes, and in the very churches, and the cloister. Above all, the sins of the good! For their sins I suffered the Agony in the Garden. For them I sweated blood. They were so many, so grievous, so heavy! I was crushed. I was overwhelmed.

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.)

Surely this lamentation of our Lord's will provide a great deal of meditation and inspiration to seek His help in changing our hearts this Lent so they may become more like unto His. How can we refuse Jesus anything when He has done so much for us? And all He asks is that we choose, choose to listen to Him and let Him work His wonders in us, unhindered by the things we so easily put in His way.

**Silent love, which burns without being consumed and says nothing,
is the greatest love! (Sarah, Pg. 58.) Let us burn with such love!**

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This site is maintained by a group of faithful Catholics who knew Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil personally and are committed to promoting and protecting the purity and integrity of the message as given by Our Lady to Sister and by Sister to us, while working toward the enthronement.