

February 14, 2016

First Sunday of Lent

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to pray - alone

“Silence happens when there are no words for what is happening.

In silence we know what it means to say everything without saying anything.

Lent

This is the season of Lent. The word "Lent" comes from the Old English word "*Lencten*," which means, Spring. How that changes the way we approach Lent. It is not just a time for soul-searching and repentance. It is a season of promise, of growth and blossoms, of fuller life.

Jesus Retreated into the Desert to Pray - Alone

Why did Jesus do this, go into the desert to pray - alone? It wasn't to get away from something, it was enter into something. Much of Christian history has severely limited people's in-depth experience of God by making religious faith largely into a set of mental abstractions. To love as Jesus loves, we must be connected to the Source of love. This connection is found in solitude, silence, and some form of contemplative prayer which quietens the monkey mind and frees us from our attachments and addictions.

This is illustrated in an article in the current edition of the Catholic Sentinel.” It is titled, “*Trappist Life Pulls Men to Authenticity before God.*” The description of monastery life of the Trappist serves well as a description of the silence of the heart. I'd like to share some quotes from some of the monks.

“Anytime we strive to lead a serious spiritual life, we will be stripped of all pretensions and our ego. In silence, the only way to grow is to admit our imperfections.

“Silence is characterized by and excitement about the interior life. As we grow in authenticity, we feel wobbly in face of God's faithfulness

“The restrictions of silence free us. Material intensity kills the spirit.

“Silence tends to shine God's light into a person, increasing self-knowledge, including awareness of our wounds. If our whole life is just blissed-out poetry, it wouldn't have any meaning or foundation.

“There is a human need for silence and acknowledgment of the divine, and silence holds space open for that.

“The reality of who you are is the one God is totally in love with. This is at the heart of silence.”

This is the Tradition

This is not just some new way of thinking, some new age philosophy. This is the tradition from the beginning.

“Be still and know that I am God” - (Ps. 46:10 - 7 B.C.)

“Pure prayer is wordless and imageless.” (Evagrius Ponticus - 4 C.)

“Out of silence is born something that draws us into silence.”

(St. Isaac of Syria - 7th C.)

“Nothing is so like God as silence.” (Meister Eckhart - 14th C.)

“The Word of God cannot be heard in the noisy world of today. Even if it were heard, it would not be the Word of God.” (Soren Kierkegaard - 19th C.)

“We do not put silence to the test, silence puts us to the test.” (Max Picard - 1940)

“God’s name can only be uttered in loving silence.” (Fr. Karl Rahner, SJ - 1975)

Silence draws us into Silence

It is easy to spot those who spend time in silent reflection about life and prayer with God. They use fewer words and find less to complain about. Their depth deepens, their vision widens, their voices become softer, with the world behind their eyes becoming more real to them than the world in front of them.

Being silent is something quite natural to us; it is our natural state of being - how sunsets on the ocean reduce us to silence, how the beautiful brings us to quiet, how being with the dying says everything without saying anything.

Find that place in which you can become present to yourself and just “be there” - hoping for everything while expecting nothing. This holds the space open for the divine discovery that we are the one we have been waiting for.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to pray - alone

“Silence is the language of the heart

So, Happy Valentine’s Day Everyone!