

Silent Word, Pleading

‘The true revolution comes from silence’ (Robert Cardinal Sarah).

‘How silently, how silently the wondrous Gift is given.’ Yet Christmas can clamor like a bullhorn and break the stillness in which we might otherwise meet Him. Don’t get me wrong: I mostly love the din of these days—grandkids whose marvel escalates to murderous screams in a few seconds, four large dogs traversing house and muddy yard, sweet exchanges among loved ones that in exasperated moments turn sour. Tis the season for brief regrets, lavish apologies.

What bugs me most is how quickly my largesse dries up, how fast I slalom from misty-eyed meditations on God’s generosity to rigid reactions to the flawed. And me, the most cratered of all...

I didn’t know how weary I was until I quieted myself. I became aware of a range of suppressed emotions—contempt for some, lust for others, empathy for afflicted ones that like a cancer turned on itself and tempted me with despair over their loneliness while reminding me of my own. Happy Holidays!

Running through all this like a dark river was external noise—the sludge of the Internet. When tired I grasp after my cell phone like a junkie to a fix. Not helpful. The divided world out there riles my own dissonance, be it impeachment wars or the nightmare loosed by LGBT+ insistence on primacy in everything (dissing Salvation Army for honoring heterosexual monogamy, demonizing persons who believe sexuality must be generative and not merely gymnastic, assassination for any who refuse to normalize moral disorder.)

‘Nothing is left but a wound of words, without perspective, without truth, without foundation. Quite often ‘truth’ is no more than the pure and misleading creation of the media, corroborated by fabricated images and testimonies’ (#56, Power of Silence, Cardinal Sarah).

But the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it (Jn. 1:5). My yuletide muddle was right where Jesus wants me. Silent. Too tired for words. Only then does the Word come, swiftly, an invitation to be still and know this God for whom ‘silence is not an absence but the most intense of all presences’ (#12, Power of...Sarah).

I need more than a little of Him; I need to re-enter His depths and stay there, not lunging into another text or event in which I will manifest my real awful presence via sharp critique or inane comment (I excel at both, poor Annette).

I need to linger in the silence, opening my mouth only to receive the Word, like a baby bird being fed by its mother. No wonder Sarah declares: ‘Developing a life of prayer is probably the first and foremost battle of our age’ (#70). My battle. My responsibility. I must ‘make every effort to enter His rest’ (Heb.4:11).

That rest is silent adoration, where He just wants to love me. Period. He wants to inebriate me with His loving Presence. He cares about people so He cares about how I love them. When I am centered in love, I love better. So He loves me. In silence. He speaks only to remind me of that love. Unchanging. Focused. Jealous. More than enough.

Jesus intimated this to a Benedictine monk. I will take it for me too. 'The purpose of My words is to unite you to Me in the silence of love. That is why friends and lovers speak to each other: to express what they hold in their hearts. Once these things have been expressed, it is enough that they remain united in the silence that is the most perfect experience of their love' (In Sinu Jesu, pp. 108, 109).

In prayer, we can hear the Silent Word pleading: for our compromised dignity, for our need for mercy, for that primitive ache which is only satisfied in the silence of Love. May we seek and savor His quiet as 2020 dawns.

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