

## Silence

*Nothing is so like God as silence* - Meister Eckhart

*Our most important task consists in remaining silent before the great God . . . he understands only one language, that of silent love.* - John of the Cross

*Without inner silence the passive side of ministry cannot be developed; and if it is not developed we will always be too busy, too entangled in situations, to develop ourselves and so be able to help others in their development.* - Sister Edmee, SLG

## I listen

Former CBS anchor Dan Rather found himself unprepared for a television interview with Mother Teresa. Ron Mehl described the newsman's encounter: "When you pray," asked Rather, "what do you say to God?" "I don't say anything," she replied. "I listen." Rather tried another tack, "Well, okay...when God speaks to you, then, what does He say?" "He doesn't say anything. He listens." Rather looked bewildered. For an instant, he didn't know what to say. "And, if you don't understand that," Mother Teresa added, "I can't explain it to you.

## Found him to be at hand

*Moreover, the witness of non-sacramental Christians warns us, that this experience of the Presence cannot be exclusively identified either with the Eucharistic or other particular devotional concomitant; but partakes of the limitless freedom of Christ. It has often visited solitary individual Christians and non-churchmen in their need. It was well known to the early Quaker assemblies, and a chief source of their confidence and strength. "The Lord of heaven and earth", says Francis Howgill, "we found to be at hand; and as we waited upon Him in pure silence, our minds out of all things, His heavenly Presence appeared in our assemblies, when there was no language or speech from any creature.* - Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*

## Emotion

*He opened the book, found the instruction by St Simeon the New Theologian, and read: "Sit down alone and in silence. Lower your head, shut your eyes, breathe out gently and imagine yourself looking into your own heart. As you breathe out, say 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' Say it moving your lips gently, or simply say it in your mind. Try to put all other thoughts aside. Be calm, be patient, and repeat the process very frequently." This simple technique performs a threefold office. It acts first as a check upon distractions, next as a cumulative autosuggestion, and last as a path of emotional discharge. "I kiss my child because I love it, and I kiss my child in order to love it," says Von Hügel. So, too, the humble practice of affective worship evokes love as well as expressing it. On this account, and in spite of its tendency to fall over into sentimentalism, it has an important part to play in the development of the Godward life, and should not lightly be discredited. For though mere emotionalism is a poor index of spiritual worth, it is none the less true that deep and rich emotion must enter into all full and living worship.* - Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*

## Resistance

*So even before we endeavor to find a space for solitary prayer, or decide how we will use this time apart, we can expect to encounter considerable resistance both within and outside of ourselves. Our culture is afraid of silence and bombards us with stimuli at every turn. - Julia Gatta*

## Solitude

*Whoever cannot be alone should beware of community,” wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer. As a pastor and director of a small residential seminary, Bonhoeffer saw what happened when individual members resist regular periods of solitude. He observed how people are apt to throw themselves into community in a futile attempt to escape their aching loneliness. Such strategies of avoidance are doomed to fail. Rather than alleviate a sense of inner isolation they end up compounding it. And the community always suffers as a result. Without the silence of solitude, speech—so essential for genuine interaction—becomes hollow and cheap. Bonhoeffer also warned against a specious, unhealthful solitude that shuns involvement with others in the church: “Whoever cannot stand being in community should beware of being alone. - Julia Gatta*

## An Inner Core

*Any authentic priesthood must derive from an inner core of silence, a life hid with Christ in God ...Only those who are at home with silence and darkness will be able to survive in, and minister to, the perplexity and confusion of the modern world. Let us seek that dark silence out of which an authentic ministry and a renewed theology can grow and flourish. - Kenneth Leech, 1988 retreat of the Order of the Ascension.*