

Miscellaneous-Devotions

Silence

SANCTITY'S MOTHER TONGUE

By MOTHER M. CECILIA, O. S. U.

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Sanctity's
Mother Tongue

AN EXAMINATION
on
SILENCE
and
USE OF THE GIFT OF SPEECH

by
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DEDICATED
TO THE
SACRED HEART OF JESUS
SUBSTANTIALLY UNITED
TO THE
WORD OF GOD



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FOREWORD

There are two phases of their life which most American religious dislike especially. One of them is silence, the other the daily examens. Both of them make us feel a bit foolish; both of them irk our American temperaments. Yet actually they are both extremely important if one is in earnest about achieving real, genuine holiness.

We might as well face it: sanctity and silence are inseparable sisters. Consequently religious sisters who are not silent of tongue and of mind and emotion will never be really saintly. Wherever silence reigns in a person or in a convent there will be found peace, serenity, a spirit of recollection, prayerfulness, and a deep genuine charity. Wherever there is noise in a convent or in any one of the nuns dwelling therein there will be disquiet, uneasiness, restlessness, tepidity, friction, backbiting, perhaps near-hatred. These are the facts whether we like them or not. Silence is a child of God, making us increasingly His children. Noise is born of the devil, and noisy religious are his brats.

In this present booklet of hers Mother Cecilia has succeeded in doing an eminently successful job for which we are all grateful. She has actually made it a zestful exercise.

This she has done largely because she has restricted it to just one corner of the whole field of our busy daily lives. By this concentration we come to see where we have been separating silence and saintliness, and we can plan how we are to go to work to reunite them.

We are sure that any nuns who make use of this pamphlet, whether singly or in groups, will be happily astonished in a short time at its power. They will find it christening their natural American aversions to this extent that they now accept the examens with real gratitude. They have found that the examens have led them to love the quiet, noiseless vital virtue of silence which they can now feel actually carrying them into the bosom of God Himself.

RICHARD L. ROONEY, S.J.

Feast of All Saints, 1951

INTRODUCTION

My dear Sisters:

We live in very noisy and distracted times. For the religious who sees the goal of her vocation as a close and loving union with her Divine Spouse, this life of ever increasing speed, of radio and video, in a world where everything seems to be designed to keep the mind from reflection even of the simplest kind — all this with the pressure of work that is never done, forms an almost insurmountable barrier to the attainment of her ideals. But let us not lose heart.

Our Holy Rule, like that of all religious orders and congregations from time immemorial provides us with a faithful guardian on our way in the regulations laid down for the observance of silence and the use of speech. These injunctions are based on the example of Christ, Our Lady, and Saint Joseph, and, if practiced with love and fidelity, will lead us to the highest pinnacle of our goal.

All asceticism is designed to restore the pristine perfection of pre-fallen man and to condition the soul more and more for the Divine Action in that soul. Silence and the prudent use of the gift of speech are the faithful guardians of that holy work. Without it all

our efforts are in vain because when the barriers are down recollection is impossible, virtue weakens, and sin enters the soul. But if we choose as our constant companion this faithful guardian, this "bridling" of the tongue, we shall avoid sin, safeguard virtue, and open the door that leads to a close and uninterrupted union with the Divine Spouse of our souls. Thus we shall also be saved from the condemnation of St. James (1:26) "And if any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

May I ask you then, in the presence of Our dear Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, to join me in an examination of conscience, on the practice of holy silence — SANCTITY'S MOTHER TONGUE. Let us study this subject every day for a month and repeat the exercise until we discover our weak points. Then let us take each of these in turn as the subject of the Particular Examen until we find we have made some true progress.

SANCTITY'S MOTHER TONGUE

St. Alphonsus says: "Few religious become saints because few love silence."

What is my attitude in regard to reverence for the rules governing the use of the tongue?

Do I look upon these rules as the faithful guardian of my spiritual life?

Do I truly appreciate and love silence as one of the greatest helps to avoid sin, to safeguard virtue, and to grow in close union with God?

Religious silence is not an end in itself but a great means to an end — a means full of grace.

Holy silence is the language of God —
SANCTITY'S MOTHER TONGUE.

Do I speak out my mind whenever and wherever I have the impulse to speak?

My religious profession implies that I avoid all unbecoming conversations.

Do I speak lightly of holy things?

Do I ever make a joke of them? Or use a quotation from the Scriptures as a way to express something for fun?

Do I use slang? Coarse or vulgar expressions?

Is my laughter too loud and free?

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind that I may see my faults against holy silence.

INSIGNIA

“Thy speech doth *betray* thee,” was said to poor Peter the night he betrayed his Master.

“Thy speech doth betray *thee*,” can be said of every one of us. We are quick to draw conclusions the minute we hear a stranger speak. We can tell his origin, his education, his habits. Among religious, the worldly soon betray themselves by the use of slang and worldly expressions; the careless and slovenly by a careless, inarticulate manner of speaking; the refined and cultured by a refined, well articulated, clear, but quiet, cultured speech.

What are my habits of speech?

Have I ever studied and practiced a refined and cultured manner of speech?

Is my voice loud and harsh? Do I ever observe my own manner of speaking and try to improve it?

Do I realize that my speech is the index of my interior attitudes, sentiments, and ideals?

Let me consider my speech as akin to my religious habit which clothes a truly refined, cultured, virtuous personality.

“Thy speech *doth* betray thee.”

THIRD DAY

SOUL MIRRORS

We cannot arrive at perfect love of God without humility. Humility is the fruit of self-knowledge. But of all knowledge, self-knowledge is the most difficult. Besides fervent prayer and the devout use of the sacraments, we have to resort to every kind of strategy to catch a glimpse of our own "ego" — our own "self." To see this ego is almost as impossible as looking into our own eyes; we need a mirror for that purpose.

There are mirrors also in the study of "self" if we will have the courage and the patience to look into them. We can study our likes and dislikes, note what things we admire or criticize, the things that give us joy or make us sad. But one of the best of these "mirrors" is what the early writers called "murmuring" or the bad habit of grumbling and complaining.

Let me study what things cause a disagreeable reaction in me, or go against the grain.

Am I a chronic complainer? Am I easily dissatisfied? Do I habitually look for the flaws and express them to others?

Do I enter generously into the joys of others or do I put a damper on them by my adverse views?

Let me look straight into this mirror and face the facts, and then have a little private session with myself before God.

Heavenly Spirit, let me act on all occasions with patience, charity, and *JOY!*

FOURTH DAY

STATIC IN THE SOUL

Courage, O my soul, we must take another look into the mirror of our "discontents" to see if they are based on nature or on grace.

All progress begins with dissatisfaction with one's present state. To be content with the mediocre will never bring me to perfection.

Do I complain because God is offended? Because His glory is outraged and sinners are losing their souls? If so, these facts will inspire me to greater zeal and a more generous service of God and souls.

But are these my complaints?

Let me look courageously at the causes of my murmurs, complaints, and criticisms.

A religious should be mortified at least to the extent that she can bear little contradictions silently.

The common life tends to make a religious unselfish. In fact, St. Augustine makes it the yard stick by which we can measure our progress: "In proportion as you pay more attention to what is common than to what is particular, you will perceive the progress you have made, and it will appear that charity, which is permanent, holds the first place in your hearts. . . ."

Must I not admit that most of my murmurings are the outcome of wounded self-love or self-will?

What did I complain about today?

Patience and generosity of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.

WELL-ORDERED SPEECH

“Remember me, Oh Lord, Thou Who rulest above all power; and give a well-ordered speech in my mouth, that my words may be pleasing in the sight of the prince” (Esther 14:12-13.)

Can you put all of your words and remarks, on the paten of tomorrow’s Mass and know that they will be acceptable to God?

This is one of the questions asked in an article by Rev. R.L. Rooney, S.J. (*Review for Religious*, Sept. 1951). In the article, “Joy in Heaven,” the alarmed guardian angels are holding an open forum on the subject of complaining among religious and resolve to present to their charges a questionnaire like this:

Do you “kick” about the weather, the cell or room you have, the house you are in, the food you are served, the work you have been assigned?

Do you ever “crab” about superiors or their directions?

Have you a few kindred souls with whom you get together to talk over the way things would be done if *you* were in charge of them?

Are you heaping up a pretty severe judgment for yourself by judging others . . . and that right severely?

Do you accept the ordinary pin-pricks of daily religious life without grumbling? (Remember you are an especially selected member of a thorn-crowned Head.)

HIDDEN SPRINGS OF SANCTITY

How precious are those hours of the morning that follow meditation, Mass, Holy Communion! How close is our union with Christ! What an incentive to advance that union by silence!

Did I try to maintain silence and recollection after breakfast?

Did I forget recollection and thoughtlessly converse with others while cleaning my room?

Do I consider a Sister a bit queer because she does not answer my chatter as we walk to class or to and from school?

One of God's most insidious enemies is the person who ridicules, belittles, brands as "too pious" or a "goody-goody" those who try to keep the rule and whose fervor is a reprimand to his own coldness and laxity. Such a one will have to face God's judgments. He may do more harm to God's cause than the Communists who may be ignorant. We can never plead ignorance or say we have not been told or warned of the danger and the harm we may do.

"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell, draw all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy." I am one who needs Thy mercy, O Jesus, because of my irresponsible talk, my sins of the tongue.

Sweet Lady of Fatima, teach me to make sacrifices in the use of my tongue, teach me holy silence.

THE CONTROL TOWER

Silence brings strength to the soul.

During the first thirty years of His life, Jesus spoke in public only *once*.

At His Baptism the sinlessness of Jesus was covered by silence. During His public life He foiled every attempt of His enemies to ensnare Him in His speech. We are dumb-founded by His love for and practice of silence.

In her Purification, Mary's immaculate purity was shrouded in silence.

The constant practice of such self-restraint requires a strength that comes only from the special grace of God.

The silence of Jesus and Mary has won for us this grace. It is ours for the asking and for the striving.

What have I done today to win this grace?

Did I check myself even once this morning when I felt the urge to talk unnecessarily? If so, thank God, and strive to do even better this afternoon.

Let me remember that if I keep myself occupied in the Presence of God, the rule of silence will largely take care of itself.

"His mother kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Can I control my joys so as not to express them during the time of silence? Or must I speak out right now?

Tower of Ivory, pray for us.

Silence of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I unite myself to Thee.

WAVE LENGTH TO HEAVEN

All religious in a sense are cloistered. Only necessity should cause us to leave this "cloistered" life, that is, the necessity that comes from the apostolate, the preparation for that work, or the good of our companions or ourselves. Other works that we take on ourselves, without the proper permissions, are as incense offered on the altar of "self." They are not blessed by obedience, they violate the cloister, and bring unnecessary distractions and worry into our own lives if not into those of others.

Do I seek exemptions from the rules that govern visits to and from relatives and friends?

Loyalty to one's order, one's religious brethren, one's community demands silence at times.

Do I talk too freely to seculars?

How about the use of the telephone? Is it for business only? Do I ask the proper permission to use the telephone?

Do I expose myself to danger by an indiscriminate use of the radio? Do I annoy others by my selfish use of the radio according to my tastes only? Or do I consider others' likes and dislikes? Do I use the community radio only with permission?

Dear Lady of Fatima, this is one sacrifice I can and will make for thee — charity and obedience will always govern my use of the telephone and the radio.

Hidden life of Jesus and Mary, I unite myself to Thee.

WRAPPED IN SILENCE

Reputation is a sacred thing. Everyone has a right to a *good* reputation. Yet what frail guards are around the good reputation of each of us!

One slip of the tongue from an associate, an inferior, a teacher may do a lifelong damage.

It should be a rule of life for each of us "to speak of *things* and *events*, not of people" (Knut Rockne).

This is especially true in regard to our students, from the tiny tots in the kindergarten to the oldest student in the college. It is very dangerous to discuss the faults of students before other members of the community who have no dealings with them. For example, to brand a small child as dumb, stupid — as having no brains — may harm that child for life. Sometimes the so-called stupid child is a victim of our own mismanagement, or our poor methods, our lack of classroom discipline, or a natural antipathy for certain characters.

Is a Sister's reputation safe when I am present, or do I join in the discussion of her faults? Do I ever make remarks to students that would make them lose confidence in another Sister's ability or virtue? Do I speak only with the greatest respect to and of God's anointed — our priests?

Sweet Lady, wrapped in silence, obtain for us some of your strength of soul so as to imitate your eloquent silence.

HARMONIOUS SILENCE

Grace is necessary to love and observe the difficult rule of silence. St. Alphonsus says: Read and meditate as much as we will, we shall never fulfill our obligations unless we ask God for the grace to do so.

Let me ask the same grace for all the Sisters so that we may be of "one heart and one soul in God."

If I chance to overhear confidential matters do I bury them within me? Or do I ever speak of them or perhaps boast of having heard them?

Am I candid, sincere, and trustworthy when questioned by a superior?

Have I a critical tongue, which is the outcome of a critical, proud mind? If so, I must get to the root of the evil and humble that pride of intellect.

Do I say hurting things? Untactful things?

St. Paul says: "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient" (I Cor. 6:12).

Do I ever slip from the truth in conversation? Do I exaggerate?

Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make our hearts like unto Thine.

Prudence of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.

A GUARD ON HIS LIPS

Then Pilate saith to him: "Dost not thou hear how great testimonies they allege against thee? And he answered him never a word; so that the governor wondered exceedingly" (Matt. 27:13-14).

Christ was falsely accused while I am charitably corrected.

Have I the grace and the ability to accept a correction in a respectful silence? Or do I permit my wounded pride to show in my face if not in my words of self-defense?

Self vindication has the strength of an instinct and only strong efforts with the grace of God over a long period of time can bring this reaction into complete control.

What efforts am I making along this line?

Am I an attentive listener? Or do I want to monopolize the conversation?

Am I a *kind* listener? Can I listen to the same story or the same stale jokes without making the speaker aware of my annoyance by breaking in or cutting him short?

To exhibit interest in what another has to say often serves to cheer that individual.

Do I interrupt others in conversation?

Do I show my lack of interest by looking at the time as soon as the other person begins to speak after I have had my say?

"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips, that my heart may not incline to evil words, to make excuses in sins" (Ps. 140:3).

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

Some spiritual illnesses are best cured by taking the positive approach. So weakness in the matter of silence needs positive treatment.

Do I ever make the effort to say encouraging words?

Have I formed the habit of a ready "Thank you" for small favors received? A "God reward you" to a priest or a superior?

How about my words of praise? Can I offer them readily or do I perhaps begrudge the ones I hear others say, especially if these are said to some one I do not particularly like or of whom I may be somewhat jealous?

The best way to make up for the abuse of a faculty is to use it strenuously for the glory of God.

Do I use my voice with vigor in all the community vocal prayers, as office, holy Mass, grace at meals, visits, litanies? And this not too fast, but with energy and vitality?

Do I offer these prayers, first for the glory of God, and then as an act of reparation for all sins of the tongue — my own and those of the whole world? By Thy seven last words, O Jesus, sanctify my speech.

Frequently our daily duties demand that we talk.

Through the observance of silence have I learned to speak with prudence and reserve so that all my words seem to be clothed in religious silence and speak the language of love?

"Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord: and my mouth shall declare Thy praise" (Ps. 50:16).

SILENCE — MORE AND MORE OF IT!

In religious communities how necessary it is to be considerate of others in the matter of silence. It is so easy to waste their time, annoy them, or disturb their recollection of mind and draw them into wrong doing by useless or untimely remarks and conversations.

Do I pray frequently for the grace to love, reverence, and obey the rule of silence and to help others observe it?

A great inspiration to silence will come from reading this rule privately, and earnestly striving to let its true importance impress itself upon my mind and will.

Do I make a practice of this at least once a month?

Let me pray to realize what great purity of soul and what perfection will be mine if I offend not in word, as St. James teaches in his Epistle. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (3:2).

If I chance to go from one of our houses to another, am I a news carrier? A tale bearer? A gossip?

Am I one of those persons who always know and revel in relating all the latest news?

Do I ask questions about matters that do not concern me? Do I pry into the business of others?

Do I surmise things pertaining to a superior's private business and pass it on as a fact?

Dear Jesus, I need light in this matter. "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth."

FOURTEENTH DAY

SILENCE REIGNS!

Rash judgments and false suspicions of the actions and even, perhaps, of the motives of others, easily become habitual unless the tongue is controlled. Reasons for transfers, appointments, etc., that may be a figment of my own imagination, or the result of wounded pride and self-love may enter into conversations unless checked by silence. Hence there is a time to speak and a time to be silent.

Have I a true reverence for the GREAT SILENCE? Do I consider trifles as an excuse for breaking it? Or am I careful that only very important matters cause me to break this sacred conventual custom?

Spirit of Wisdom, preside over all my thoughts, words, and actions from this hour until the moment of my death.

Am I one who stands and converses near the chapel, at the head of stairways and other passages, in the halls, or at the entrance of a Sister's room? I must give an account of every idle word.

Do I break silence in the refectory before meals while waiting for all to assemble?

After the close of the mid-day recreation do I continue to talk as at recreation, or am I prompt in resuming my duties in a spirit of recollection?

Do I cease speaking at once when the signal is given for night prayer?

“Eloquent silence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I unite myself to Thee” (Mother St. Paul, in *Virginibus Christi*).

THE CONSECRATED TONGUE

Jesus rested on my tongue this very morning.

To recall this truth will help me to observe silence and grow in union with Him.

What a blessed thought it is to ask Him to sanctify my tongue and all my words, so that none will escape me that does not proceed from His meek and humble Heart!

Have I asked Him earnestly to give me the light to see the value and the necessity of silence for a life pleasing to Him?

“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips” (Ps. 140:3).

Do I understand and take to heart the fact that mission life does not exempt me from the rule of silence?

Do I avoid speaking of community affairs on the streets, riding in cars, or elsewhere when in the presence of seculars?

Charity and usefulness are the only releases for my tongue. If it is not useful to speak — useful to others or to myself — if charity, my work, the apostolate do not require it of me, silence is not only better but is expected of a good, prayerful religious. I must give an account of every idle word.

“Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36).

“In the multitude of words there shall not want sin” (Prov. 10:19).

“Spirit of Understanding, enlighten and teach me.”

SIXTEENTH DAY

GOD'S PEACE PLAN

Once I begin to realize the true value of the rule of silence as a means to keep me from faults and sins, I will find myself advancing in purity of heart and conscience.

There are times, however, when we offend against the virtues of poverty and obedience, by *not* speaking, that is by not obtaining the necessary permissions or by not reporting our expenditures, presumed permissions, or our failures to be present at community exercises, and other faults we should manifest to the superior.

What true peace of heart I would enjoy if I were always faithful in these matters!

Total dependence was the price I imposed on myself when I pronounced my vows.

Do I shun the humiliation of asking for the things I need and do I follow the dictates of nature which would rather be independent?

Do I give an itemized account of all expenditures to the superior, whether at home or on a mission? Do I ask permission to leave the convent grounds or the mission house or grounds? To enter the homes of seculars? Before I make any purchases? Do I converse with employees when it is not my duty to direct their work?

Let me take the index of my rule and look up "permissions" to refresh my mind on all the times and occasions I must act only with permission.

Obedience of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.

SANCTITY'S LIFE-LINE

Giving an account of my absences from prayer, recreation, meals, duties, to the superior in the mother house or on the missions advances me in the struggle for humility.

I owe this to a superior, not only as an act of courtesy, but in obedience to the rule and to lessen the responsibilities of a superior who is obliged to find out if I do not tell her.

Do I ask the blessing of obedience on all the ideas and projects I want to put into execution *before* I launch them, not after they are so far in the making that I put the superior in a situation where she cannot refuse without sacrificing my name or that of the community?

Such conduct is what might be called "tempting God" in the person of the superior, whom I force to a responsibility that is not rightfully hers. The same may be said of a work undertaken without the knowledge and consent of the pastor in regard to a school or the sacristy.

Do I respect the rights and responsibilities of those whom God has placed over me?

"I have chosen to be abject in the house of our Lord Jesus Christ." — This I sang on the day of my religious reception. Let me not spoil this beautiful offering by a spirit of independence now.

O Jesus, let my efforts to observe the prescribed silence obtain for me the grace to ask all necessary permissions so that my daily sacrifice may be pleasing to Thee.

EIGHTEENTH DAY

WHAT IS YOUR SPIRITUAL TEMPERATURE?

A spiritual writer has said: "Silence is the thermometer of fervor in a religious community."

The fervor of the community is the sum total of the fervor of each individual member.

How does my thermometer of silence read?

Sins of the tongue let it fall below zero.

Efforts at the perfect observance of silence will gradually raise the temperature to 10, 20, 30, 40 degrees which is at least above freezing. More love and greater efforts make it rise to 60, 70, 80, 90 degrees. Religious fervor ought to continue to rise until above 100 degrees in the shade, that is, all during the day. At Mass and Holy Communion it should burn with an increase of fervent love until all imperfection is consumed in the flames of divine Charity, and we live in the glow of it all the remainder of the day and night.

Do I realize that all these benefits come to me through the humble and much neglected virtue of silence; that religious silence, observed as a means to the great end — union with my Divine Spouse — is the guardian of that celestial fire?

Heart of Jesus, burning Furnace of Charity, inflame our hearts with love for Thee.

Eloquent silence of Jesus and Mary, I unite myself to Thee.

THE LANGUAGE OF GOD

Silence makes me more like my Divine Spouse.

“While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty Word, O Lord, came down from Thy royal throne. Alleluia.” This is what the Church sings as the antiphon for the Magnificat on Christmas day.

God’s greatest works were wrought in silence and they continue so.

Jesus was silent in His home at Nazareth because it was the means He chose to maintain union with His Heavenly Father and of working for the salvation of souls. It is also the best method for us, His spouses.

Is my esteem for silence growing?

What progress have I made in checking my impulses to speak during silence time?

How many times did I check myself today?

Eloquent silence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.

Teach me, Jesus, the lesson of uniting myself intimately with Thy Eternal Father, in union with Thee.

Help me to be silent with everybody so that I may be free to talk to You while I work for You. Let not the things I have to do make me forget You.

“Live, Jesus, live, so live in me
That all I do be done by Thee,
And grant that all I think and say
May be Thy thoughts and words today.”

THE SENTINEL

Silence is the safeguard of the religious life and it helps all the other virtues. (This and the following two pages are adapted from Mother St. Paul's *Virginibus Christi.*)

CHARITY

It is almost impossible to fail in charity if we keep the rule of silence. The recollection that flows from it prevents faults against charity in thought and action, for I cannot have uncharitable thoughts while I am thinking of my Divine Spouse; neither is it possible to do an uncharitable act if all my actions are done for Him. The only way I can sin is by my careless words. If I keep my rule of silence perfectly, an uncharitable word will not pass my lips.

Have I formed the habit of frequent little attentions to my Divine Guest by short ejaculatory prayers? Or do several hours or perhaps a whole morning pass without my addressing Him so much as once?

Do I think of saying a short prayer for the ones who annoy me or toward whom I feel an aversion?

Do I ever refuse to speak to one whom I have offended or who has offended me?

St. Augustine says: "Those who refuse to forgive or apologize, or who do so against their will, in vain are they in the monastery, though not expelled."

Profound recollection of the Heart of Jesus, ignite my cold heart with that Divine Flame.

HUMILITY

Can silence help the queen of virtues?

What keeps us from repeating the word of praise we have heard about ourselves?

What hinders us from excusing ourselves?

What closes our mouth when we are falsely or even justly accused?

What prevents us, perhaps many times a day, from speaking of ourselves and what we have done? Silence, a golden silence; and in all such cases it is humility that has gained and humility that has been safeguarded.

“Humility of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.”

When I am impatient, bad-tempered, and irritable, do I recall my rule of silence?

If so, it is wonderful how quickly calm will be restored within. The exterior calm helps the interior, and is a surer and a quicker remedy than the self-gratifying one of saying all I have to say under pretext of getting rid of the enemy, whereas I am in reality only increasing its strength.

Am I convinced of this fundamental law of the passions and emotions — that to express them is to increase their strength? Or does my pride keep me from facing this fact?

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto Thine.

Patience of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.

Patience of the Heart of Jesus, weary not of my weakness.

OBEDIENCE

It is not easy to see how silence helps obedience. But what is at the root of disobedience? Pride, a dislike of authority, of dependence, of rules and regularity, of anything which puts the government of self into the hands of another. Human nature revolts against this. What can tame the independent spirit and bring it into subjection? Anything that tends to self-mastery and self-control tends to keep self in its place and teaches it that it cannot have its own way.

Here our rule of silence comes in as one of the best possible helps, because it is a perpetual exercise in self-control, self-abnegation, a continual curbing of the spirit of revolt, and the best preparation for a ready obedience to anything that crosses our will. Silence puts many a nail in the coffin of the "old man" and each nail makes obedience more secure.

What is my attitude toward discipline and self-control?

Silence also makes us save time and enables us to perform our duties more thoughtfully and more efficiently, so that we can be more prompt in answering the call of the bell for prayer, meals, and recreation.

In these ways silence safeguards obedience.

Do I consider the rules of the house as the rules of God's house?

Does silence help me to a more perfect obedience in little things?

Obedience of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.

EPITOME OF ALL VIRTUES

The silence of Christ before Pilate was of such a rare kind that it can only be found in those who have thoroughly mortified in themselves the love of honor and even of their own life, for such souls, wholly relying upon the providence of God, neither fear dishonor nor death.

In Ecclesiasticus, the Holy Spirit puts it this way: "Melt down thy gold and silver, and make a balance for thy words and a just bridle for thy mouth: and take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue" which advice Ven. Louis de Ponte interprets as: "assemble together all the moral virtues with the virtue of Charity (figured by the gold), and all the virtues of the understanding with that of Prudence (figured by the silver), since all of them are requisite to know when to speak and when to hold one's peace; for as all vices conspire to set at liberty the tongue, so it is necessary that all virtues unite in the tying of the same." Therefore St. James says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (3:2).

Do I realize what great perfection hinges on the practice of silence?

Do I understand that holy silence is not only a *means* to a great end, but also that its constant practice is a *result* of many great victories over self?

"Send forth Thy Light and Thy Truth";
O Lord, illuminate my mind that I may see the splendor of virtue.

PASSPORT TO SANCTITY

A very dangerous attitude of mind in regard to silence is to take the breaking of it for granted, and to think that, since nearly everyone does it, such faults are to be expected.

Such an attitude is fatal. How do I stand in this regard? Do I pray against it? Do I ask permission for unusual conversations of any length?

Do I love silence "in order to attain recollection of mind and safeguard religious fervor" as the rule states?

I knew the rule when I entered religion and pronounced my holy vows. I knew that silence was a part of religious discipline and an essential part of the virtue of obedience. Am I indifferent to this? Or have I grown careless about its exact observance? If so, this will lead me into many faults and sins and rob me of many special graces.

What is my general attitude in regard to interior as well as exterior silence? Do I dislike being alone for any length of time?

"The measure in which a soul can bear interior solitude and silence is the measure of its spiritual capacity" (Paul-Marie de la Croix, O.C.D.).

Sweet Lady of Fatima, obtain for all of us a spirit of sacrifice and a great reverence for silence and solitude after your holy example.

Eloquent silence of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, continue to instruct me in SANCTITY'S MOTHER TONGUE.

FRUITFULNESS OF SILENCE

“Quiet is the first step to sanctification,” says St. Basil.

Consideration of others requires that I avoid carefully all unnecessary noise.

Am I a noisy person? Do I open and close all doors quietly? “The Lord is not in the wind or the earthquake” (III Kings 19:11).

Am I careful not to walk heavily and noisily when I enter and leave the chapel, especially during meditation? Am I noisy with the kneeler, especially when going up to Holy Communion? With my books in the pew?

With what care do I handle all my dishes and silverware at the table so as not to disturb the reading?

A musician is taught to “think” in his fingers. We religious, should endeavor to “pray” in our fingers, in our footsteps, and in all our actions.

Archbishop Goodier, S.J., says that we should accustom ourselves gradually to let our mental prayer spread over all our daily occupations. To do this he recommends that we speak, act, and work QUIETLY as though we were praying.

Speak, Act, and Work as if We are Praying!

What a beautiful and fruitful ideal!

Jesus, silent in the bosom of the Eternal Father,
 Jesus, silent in the womb of the Immaculate
 Mother,

Jesus, silent in the arms of the Mother of
 Sorrows, I unite myself to Thee.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

(This and the two following pages are adapted from *Our Divine Friend*, Fr. Schryvers, C.Ss.R.)

We might sometimes wonder and be astonished in reading the lives of the saints, that Jesus should have spoken to them with such familiarity and so affectionately as to call them His confidants and His secretaries. His voice is as soft as a zephyr and speaks to each soul, not loudly, but in the depths of the soul, in the secrecy of the heart.

Do I frequently ask Him to communicate Himself to me? If I did, He would soon make Himself heard. Even in our distracted life we sometimes are aware of His inner workings. What would it be if, through the practice of silence, we were attentive to His voice!

Great purity of heart is the beginning of intimate life with Jesus, and this is obtained and secured by the practice of recollection.

The great Bishop Joseph Gross told the Sisters that if they came to confession and said they had been very much wanting in recollection, they need not add anything, he could tell them all their sins. He also told them that recollection is necessary to recognize our faults and imperfections and the sacrifices we ought to make.

Where do I stand in regard to recollection?

Through Thy most Precious Blood, O Jesus, wash and purify me from all my sins and the least imperfections.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

FREEDOM IN RESTRAINT

Behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart (Osee 2:14).

Do memories of the past interfere with my interior peace? Such as painful and unpleasant events that tempt me to bitterness and resentment? Do I sanctify my memory by recalling God's presence and His many benefits?

Do I let my imagination run wild? Do I endeavor to control this faculty so that I can replace its evil or idle representations with scenes from the gospels that will nourish prayer?

Am I striving to moderate my desires, my joys, and my sadness? Do I control my vain fears, preoccupations and solicitude? And are the stirrings of my passions subject to reason?

All these are the disturbers of the silence of the soul.

Have I learned to dispel useless thoughts, vain projects which sometimes rush through my mind? Do the things I read fill my mind with unnecessary distractions?

Do human attachments keep my Divine Guest at a distance?

Have I acquired sufficient recollection that I can now see in what this interior silence consists?

“Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.”
O Jesus Lord, create within my heart
A solitude, where I, with Thee may keep
A holy tryst — just Thou and I apart
In loving union, strong and pure and deep.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

AT ATTENTION!

“Mary, sitting at the Lord’s feet, heard His word” (Luke 10:39).

Silence and recollection make me attentive to the inner voice of Jesus; I will learn to recognize His voice so that soon an intimate colloquy will be established.

Do I recognize Him when He speaks through an emotion, a sudden light, an instantaneous conviction, an inspiration, a mysterious word?

It might come in the midst of a useful conversation, or during meditation, by the impression of a passing event, or a simple impression of the mind. For such attention, silence and calmness of soul are necessary.

Am I careful to avoid needless speaking with others?

Are my exterior occupations regulated and do I pursue all necessary business calmly so that I will not be carried away as in a whirlpool?

“Solitude is the home of the saints and silence is their language.”

Have I acquired the habit, after I perform the duties of charity and courtesy, to hide like the turtle-dove in the hollow of the rock which is Christ?

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

* * *

O good Jesus, hear me.

In Thy wounds hide me.

Permit not that I be separated from Thee.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY

WHERE THERE IS PEACE

How can I arrive at this exterior and interior silence which is of such importance in my religious life?

By uniting myself with the silence of the Heart of Jesus in daily persevering efforts?

Let me have frequently this prayer not only on my lips but in my heart: "Eloquent silence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee."

Let me think of His silence and remember that it is *He who asks for mine*. I am like Him when I keep it and unlike Him when I break it.

Do I consider my rule of silence a bond which binds me closely to my Divine Spouse?

Do I fully realize its importance in the sanctification of my own soul? And that by it I can do much for the salvation of many other souls, if, in the spirit of sacrifice and love, I unite it to His fruitful silence?

"*Jesus held His peace*" (Matt. 26:63). The very expression for silence is to hold one's peace. To break silence is to let go of peace.

Do I check my impulses to reply?

Jesus, teach me to "hold my peace" especially when to speak would displease Thee, offend another, or disturb my peace of soul. Jesus, give me Thy peace and let me be an instrument of Thy peace wherever You place me in this world.

Eloquent silence of the Heart of Jesus, I unite myself to Thee.

THIRTIETH DAY

SYMPHONY OF LOVE

Jesus also spoke. He spoke to His holy Mother in defense of His Father's glory. He spoke in defense of Magdalene when she was criticized by Simon for anointing His Sacred Feet. He did not hesitate to reprimand severely the hypocritical Pharisees.

He spoke kind and encouraging words to the poor and the sick.

He spoke from the abundance of His Heart at the Last Supper, and

He spoke His gospel of love to the whole world.

From the Cross He spoke His last seven words of love.

Someday . . . He will speak to me when we meet face to face. What will these words be?

Much will depend on how I have used my gift of speech either by controlling it according to His will as expressed in the Gospels and my rule of SILENCE, or by using it for the good of others and for God's eternal glory.

Am I earnestly striving to make daily progress in this all-important work?

Eternal Word, spoken by the Father,

Word made flesh, dwelling before me in the Tabernacle,

Word, placed on my tongue this morning and now dwelling in my very soul,

Incarnate Word in substance— a Divine Person, sanctify my words.

Glorified Word, dwelling and spoken in eternal silence, teach me to love and reverence the eloquence of holy silence.

LOVE'S QUEST

Having made this vast and comprehensive review on holy silence and the use of the gift of speech, where is my weakest point?

What ideal should I set up for myself?

Are my efforts real, concrete, regular, and continuous?

Let me offer these efforts and the sacrifices they entail to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for her intentions.

Through this exercise has the thermometer of religious fervor risen to higher degrees of love?

Let me now stir myself to greater efforts so that the blessing of God may rest on my community, that we may give greater glory to His Divine Majesty, and that our great apostolate may bring forth abundant fruits.

Has this practice raised the level of my prayer-life as it should? Let me endeavor to become more conscious of that life of grace "whose highest expression goes beyond ritualism and the external services of religion to an inner dedication of mind and heart, the silent gazing of the lover upon the beloved" (*The Love of God*, Dom Graham).

I thank Thee, O Jesus, for the progress You have helped me to make. Continue to teach me Thy ways and to help me learn at least the rudiments of the language of Heaven — SANCTITY'S MOTHER TONGUE. Give me the graces I need in this holy quest that leads ultimately to Thee both in time and in eternity. Amen.

SILENCE

O, thou strong and sacred silence, self-
contained in self-control;
O, thou palliating silence, Sabbath art thou
of the soul;
Lie like snow upon my virtues, lie like dust
upon my faults,
Silent when the world dethrones me, silent
when the world exalts.
Tamper not with idle rumor lest the truth
appear to lie;
Carve thy life to hilted silence, wrong shall
fall on it and die.
Tamper not with accusation, harvest not what
thou hast heard,
Christ stood in the court of Herod, but he
answered not a word.
Know thou this, that there is nothing in the
sounding lists of life
That so fortifies thy manhood as the argu-
ment of life;
Listen not to old wives' fables, draw thyself
from such apart,
Keep the thought of life like Mary, virgin to
a virgin's heart.
It is well for us to suffer, it is well for us
to wait;
Well to swing like little children all our life
on death's loose gate;
Well to feel a mortal sickness wean the soul
from earthly spell;
Well to hear when all is over, that sweet
whisper, "All is well."

HAGEMAN



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