

SILENCE

‘Silence is the great revelation’ – Lao Tzu

There are many types of silence. Perhaps you have encountered some of them in situations or between people –taciturn silence, peaceful silence, ominous silence, waiting silence. The silence or stillness we explore here, however, is a silence of surrender and love, a silence of awe. In some of life’s precious moments, there is that kind of silence between people, in their moments of greatest union. And it is that kind of silence we bring to prayer when we surrender ourselves in love to God.

The young French Carmelite, Elisabeth of the Trinity, described her own prayer like this:

I am silent
I listen to Him

It is sometimes only when we become silent that we can actually hear what God is saying to us.

Many people in our society enjoy precious times of silence, perhaps in walking through the bush or watching the sunrise. Many others, however, are afraid of silence, and run from it by filling their lives with lots of noise.

The psalmist has a wonderful word for us he says, “Be still and know’. He could have said, it is only when we are still that we can truly know.

Jesus needed his silent times. We read that he would often go out during the night to pray. We are told that Mary the Mother of Jesus ‘pondered these events in her heart’. Those words reveal that she treasured silence. Especially at the time of her pregnancy with Jesus she needed those long periods of silence to commune with the child she was carrying within her. Silence to hear the still small voice.

Gerard Manly Hopkins, the poet who was a Jesuit priest, wrote of silence as a kind of music.

‘Elected Silence, sing to me,
And beat upon my whorled ear
Pipe me to pastures still, and be
The music that I care to hear’.

Remember a time when you ‘sat still like a child’.

Are there times in your day when you can enter and stay within the silence of awe?