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76

THE EMBARRASSMENT OF SILENCE

There seems to be a distrust, or at least dislike, of silence in our liturgy; a need to fill up every moment with combinations of words, music, or movement. Do we fear the silence which lets us attend to the inner voice? or have we just let liturgical accretions clutter the clarity of our worship? I'd like to take a closer look at some of the possible moments of silence which are available, but often neglected, in our liturgy.

First, let me clarify that by "silence" I don't mean the absence of sound. Certainly, absolute silence is a part of worship, and the Prayer Book offers many specific points at which silence of this sort is suggested or required: after the readings, during forms of the Prayers of the People, after the Breaking of the Bread, and so on. This is sometimes the hardest silence to enter and experience. Most people begin squirming after fifteen seconds. Can we not watch with him one minute? This calls for education and training in the practice of silent prayer, meditation and contemplation.

But one can be silent inwardly while speaking, singing, or praying, with an inner silence that is deeper -- a stillness achieved in focusing on a single activity; a simplicity of devotion; a purity and integrity of words and actions, rather than their absence; a prayer uttered by both lips and heart.

Take the Offertory, for example. This was the heart of the people's liturgy in the earliest eucharistic rites: the point at which the hymn we now sing at Communion, "Let all mortal flesh keep silence," was sung. We must remember

that the collection is not the Offertory, but only a preparation for it. Ideally we might follow the example of the ante-nicene Church and take the collection at the door, before the service begins. The Offertory proper, the bringing forward of the people's gifts, is the people's moment. Could it not be such a time of focused attention? The choir could sing the anthem, its offering, as the physical offerings of the congregation are brought forward and blessed; or if a hymn is desired at this point, verses could be sung before and after the Offertory procession (and the censing of the altar, gifts and people, in those parishes that continue this ritual practice), with an organ improvisation during these important actions. Many's the time I've seen a congregation with its nose in the hymnal, oblivious to the fact that it's being revered by the thurifer! We should note that the Prayer Book rubric allows for "a hymn, psalm or anthem" at this point, not a combination of two or three. Perhaps observance of this rubric might clarify the liturgical significance of the Offertory?

While on the subject of rubrics, it should be noted that the traditional "recessional" hymn is not provided for by the Prayer Book. The final place for a hymn is before the blessing and dismissal. Fewer things look less graceful than a string of clergy and altar servers trying to walk while singing from hymnals. Trying to sing from memory is even more disastrous: the glazed expressions and open mouths are reminiscent of nothing so much as an aquarium! If the hymn were finished before the dismissal, and the retiring procession took place during the postlude, three problems would be solved:

the entire worshipping body would be singing the hymn together, the people could see the procession (and the clergy their way, if not their feet), and the organist would finally have a captive audience to hear the postlude! Processions are one place we can afford unabashed pomp: this is a wonderfully festive way to end a service. Alternatively, during a penitential season, a silent procession can be a very moving experience for all concerned.

Let us then try to use silence, both absolute and inward, as a means more completely to bind together the People of God into the Body of Christ, which binding is the very meaning and purpose of liturgy.

-- Tobias Stanislas, BSG

Br. Tobias Stanislas is director of education for the community, and works as assistant publications director at the Episcopal Church Center in New York. He is a member of the Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan, where he serves as a member of the choir, of the ministry committee, and as a lector and intercessor.

Special thanks to **Nipa** and **Onell Soto** for their help in the design of the new **Servant** masthead.



THE SEABURY CROSS ARRIVES AT ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, EAST HADDAM. CT.

COMMUNITY_NOTES

SCARSDALE, NY: On June 2, the **Superior General**, joined by **Brs.** William Francis and Stephen, attended a fund-raiser reception for the Friends of the Anglican Diocese of the Arctic, at the Church of St. James the Less. The guest of honor was Mr. Robert Johnstone, Consul General of Canada to the City of New York. The Brotherhood has supported the work in the Arctic, most recently supplying vestments and altar appointments to St. George's Anglican Mission, Great Whale River, where the Rev. Paul Bachmann is priest-in-charge.

NEW YORK, NY: The Brotherhood recently became the recipient of a grant from the Church Periodical Club, National Books Fund. The gift will be used for the purchase of books required for the community's training program. Our prayers and thanks to the Committee and to Province VII for taking this grant on as their share of the work of CPC. +++ **Brs. Stephen, William Francis and Novice Brother Charles** have recently completed the Education for Ministry Program of the University of the South (Sewanee). Several other of the brothers are involved in the program.

EAST HADDAM, CT: **Brs. James and Tobias Stanislas and Postulant Joseph Thomas** took part in the Seabury Commemoration at St. Stephen's Church. As a part of a year-long celebration, a chalice and paten used by Bishop Seabury and a 12 foot-high wooden cross symbolizing unity in the faith, are making a tour of all the parishes of the diocese. The brothers attended the Eucharist at St. Andrew's Church, Madison, and helped transport the chalice, paten and cross to St. Stephen's for the mid-afternoon procession from the town square and the Eucharist. A photograph in this issue shows a detail of the wooden cross, with Br. James in the background, while the Vicar, the Rev. Richard Payne reads the collect for Holy Cross Day.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA: **Novice Brother Philip** recently attended the meeting of the Executive Council at Mercy Center, Burlingame, as a member of the Press.+++ **Br.** Leslie Victor, working on the Board Meeting of the Presiding Bishops Fund for World Relief in this city, was able to spend the weekend with Br. Philip and attend the parish he serves, St. Mary the Virgin.

MADISON, WI: Postulant Bernard Francis continues his work with the Board of the Episcopal Mission and will shortly begin as a committee leader, going into retirement and nursing Homes in Madison. He will teach Christian Education this summer and has just completed his exams on Church History, Theology, Ethics and Moral Theology at Nashotah House.



BOSTON, MA: We are sorry to announce the death of the Rev. David Clayton, SSJE. Fr. Clayton was a good friend to several of the brothers in the community, and his presence will be sorely missed. The photograph shows Fr. Clayton with Br. William, BSG, in the Epiphany Chapel of the Church of St. John the Evangelist; it was taken just two years ago, on the feast of Corpus Christi.

May he rest in peace.

MORE

COMMUNITY NOTES:

BRONX, NY: The Feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury (May 26) was celebrated here by the brothers at St. Augustine's House, **Brs. Leslie Victor**, James and Tobias Stanislas, with a "Patronal pot-luck" supper for the Superior General and Brothers of Province II. For the most part the day was sunny and warm, though it rained later on; and the activities began with First-Class Vespers.



THE SERVICE OF SILENCE

"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.
Psalm 4, vs.4 - KJV

Other translations prefer the word "silence." In this age so conscious of noise pollution, can anything be more timely? I have found that a silence pregnant with God makes you feel that even one audible word would be sacrilege! These precious interludes in can really serve as times that are quiet yet creative in our lives.

Silence serves as an aid to memory. When we are still, the past comes back to haunt us, perhaps to humble us or to make us happy. In the psalm, when David is quiet, his memory goes to work. He looks back on his problems and realizes that they have produced a better man -- with a richer soul and a finer faith. Silence is the setting in which memory has its best chance and does its noblest work.

Silence is a form of ministry, not least to ourselves. Without some such concern against evil and protest against it, something is missing from our moral fiber. Silence is even more a form of service to others. In another, sometimes a hurt is too deep for words; it calls for loving silence. Many times at funerals, I have taken the opposite of the norm; no smoothly rehearsed sentence, no glib, conventional phrase or condolence; just a clasp of the hand and whatever of Christ's tender care I could convey with my eyes. When a heart is throbbing with its most acute anguish, it is not speech that is needed, but our Lord's healing silence.

Silence is also a symbol of mastery. When Christ hung upon the cross, how did he reply to cruel taunts? With a silence so noble and noteworthy that the centurion reckons it as sublime. Like the Savior, we too cannot escape occasions when the noblest weapon of moral dignity is silence. Let no one think silence useless. Give it a larger and more meaningful place in your soul.

Whatever you do, don't treat Christ with such carelessness and flippancy that he can return you nothing but his awful and dooming silence. His silence to you can be fatal. Your silence, in him may be tremendously fruitful.

Richard Thomas, BSG
Superior General

