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Habit 5: Savor a Few Minutes of Silence

Our world today seems to be one of noise and intrusion. Cell phones ringing, TV's blaring, radios and iPods playing, horns honking, babies crying, talk show hosts ranting, politicians filibustering, appliances humming, power lawn mowers mowing and snow blowers blowing, telemarketers and pollsters calling, etc, etc, etc. Our modern society seems to bombard our senses so that we experience information, input and sound overload. When we have gaps in the noise there are those who feel so uncomfortable that they turn to incessant idle chattering with whomever is near in order to break the silence.

"The lesson of silence: may there return to us an appreciation of this stupendous and indispensable spiritual condition, deafened as we are by so much tumult, so much noise, so many voices of our chaotic and frenzied modern life." (Pope Paul VI)

Habit five during our Year of Faith is to savor a few minutes of silence. Silence enables us to recharge our senses so that they function better. Silence enables us to prepare ourselves to really listen to God, to others and to ourselves.

You will notice that we are not just to take part in or endure silence. We are to "savor" the silence. That means we are to enjoy the silence, to really experience it, and to do it with pleasure. Those of us who are older can remember a world that wasn't as hectic and noisy and intrusive as the one we now live in. We also remember the joys of quiet activities and the beauty of silence in our lives. We may not be able to recreate that world of long ago, but we also do not need to give in to the present world by eliminating all silence.

In our liturgies that we celebrate, the Church has wisely included times for us to be silent, such as a pause for silent prayer or a brief silent reflection after the readings. Silence is an integral part of worshipping.

Silence is an integral part of being a healthy human being. It helps to keep our body, mind and spirit in balance. "True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment." (William Penn)

Silence is an integral part of our relationship with God. "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46) Too often we try to get along without God, or worse, to compete with God. Silence enables God to speak to us and for us to feel God's presence. "For God alone my soul waits in silence; from Him comes my salvation." (Psalm 62) To make God a priority in our life it is necessary to remove the things which distract us from focusing on our faith and our relationship with God. Silence is fertile ground for hearing God. In silence we are granted the privilege of listening to God.

During this Year of Faith, let us resolve to cultivate an appreciation for silence. This is not to say that we must take a vow of silence or go to an extreme in being silent. However, if we are to savor a few minutes of silence on a regular basis we must be intentional in creating some opportunities to do so. Following are a few ways to savor silence.

- * Sit quietly and read a book or an article about your faith or someone who is a model of faith.
- * Spend some time in silent prayer when you awaken each day to prepare for the day.
- * Spend some time in silent reflection at the end of the day to thank God for your blessings.
- * Take time at least once a week to keep silence for a period of time to allow God to speak to you. Have no agenda. Just listen for the still, small voice of God in the silence.
- * Attend an annual retreat, preferably one that is a silent retreat or one that allows for a good portion of quiet time.
- * Turn off your phone, TV, iPod and other personal technology for a period of time each day to savor the silence.
- * Spend time in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament when adoration is offered at the church.

There are many other ways to incorporate silence into your faith life and your daily routine. Try out different ways to be silent and select what works best for you. Soon you will look forward to the opportunity to truly savor the silence.

"We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass - grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. We need silence to be able to touch souls."
(Mother Teresa)

Deacon Paul