**Lesson 2: Stillness**

[[1]](#endnote-1)When we celebrate holy Mass there are moments in which the voices of both priest and faithful become silent. Sometimes the priest does something silently at Mass while the congregation follows in watchful, prayerful anticipation. What do we do with these intervals of quiet and what does this stillness really imply?

Stillness is a need to have attentiveness at the depths of our being where the beautiful and truly important reigns. We recognize the need for this stillness at a concert, for example. It implies that speech end and silence be the prevailing reality. This stillness comes only if it is seriously desired. If we value it, it brings us joy because we are able to be affected by God’s work happening around us and within; if not, we find ourselves restless. We might say “I can’t kneel quietly.” Or, “My baby cries a lot”. But together as a congregation, that stillness proper to the most beautiful things in existence can be the dominant reality we experience even in the midst of that crying sound.

It takes time to achieve this kind of stillness before God where God is able to speak to us at our very depths. It cannot be accomplished all at once. The mere desire for it is not enough; we must continue to practice it. The minutes before Mass are best, but to genuinely have them to prepare ourselves means we must arrive early and avoid reading the bulletin. We can even see our preparation for this stillness as beginning in the car or when we walk to Church, or even as we get ready at home that morning. We might see stillness as a negative thing: “Don’t talk!” But it is really a way of being all there, receptive, alert, and ready.

A great thing about stillness is that it forms us as a congregation and a community before God. When we are present not only bodily, but spiritually with stillness, we are able to unite ourselves to each other by our mutual prayer together; When we have stepped together into the spiritual “space” around us and widened it and heightened it through our attentiveness to God; then we form ourselves as a congregation able to celebrate the sacred mystery of our Lord’s love for us!

1. *The above reflection is a very abridged version of Msgr. Romano Guardini, Meditations before Mass, (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1993), chapter 1, “Stillness”, pp. 9-12.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)