

The Art of Teresian Prayer

Carmelite School of Prayer Advent 2020

I take a moment to meditate on all these things in my heart (Luke 2:19)

There are several ways to look at silence. Together we will come to understand how to avoid making silence something negative or about nothingness. We will come to see silence as a place to meet God, a place where Elijah experienced God on Mount Horeb. (1 Kings 19:12)

The heart of Saint John of the Cross, so tender but so strong, is the heart of the other Christ.

Brother Bruno of Jesus-Marie

Snippet #21: Silence

We have talked both about listening and about the Word. Today we are going to talk about silence. It makes up an important part of prayer. There are several forms of silence and we need to be careful not to confuse them.

There is silence in the negative sense of the word. For example at school we might hear: “Shhh!!! Be quiet!” or at home: “Hey, be quiet, stop talking!” Talking is forbidden; the restriction is generally not well received. This form of silence does not allow us to grow. We must be quiet!

Then there is silence from the Far East that is experienced as nothingness in prayer. Through yoga or zen, we go through a process that arrives at nothingness.

Finally, in the Christian tradition, silence is not nothingness but rather is filled with the presence of God. On Mount Horeb, the prophet Elijah experienced God. We have the description of his encounter with the Lord in the book of Kings. The elements were unleashed: God was not in the storm; God was not in the fire; God was in the gentle murmur of silence. It is something unspeakable yet God is there. Silence is tamed because it is the place of the presence of God.
Amen

Prepared by the Discalced Carmelite Friars, Paris, France (translated from French)