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Silence

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Silence

If we were interested in exploring a counter-cultural experience, we could seek deliberately to obtain internal as well as external silence. Sound surrounds us, from loud speakers throughout modern theaters and from tiny sets of ear-plugs on many a person's head, from the ever-present background music in shops and building lobbies, and from the TV's and radios of our living rooms and private spaces. Silence is often treated as an enemy, rather than the supportive friend that the expenditure of a little of our valuable time will allow us to re-discover.

Actively and consciously providing silence in our lives is a spiritual exercise. We choose to do something that has no apparent immediate material benefit, yet results in confidently made decisions, insights into our values, and focus for directing our energies of mind, body, and spirit. In silence, we can let God communicate with us, especially when we seek responses to our questions and concerns. In silence, we might become aware of thoughts that "make sense," accompanied by a sense of peace. And we can also identify from within, some central desires that cannot be perceived in any other setting. By choosing to seek silence for ourselves, we are more likely to receive incoming communications that satisfy our hearts, even if we do not understand with our minds. Most of us treasure such experiences when we have them.

No one will provide silence for us in our busy days. And we might think that we cannot possibly find the time or create the conditions for obtaining a bit of silence in the midst of the very many demands upon our personal attention. But we need the appropriate conditions for separating reasonable requests from unreasonable, and for deliberately selecting those that our minds and hearts together recognize as suitable for us. The thought that we cannot, in our entire day, establish even a brief period of silent separation from internal and external sources of sound is as unkind and contrary to our well-being as having a persecutor deliberately miss-direct us. We have to take charge of our lives not just in general, but in some particular and regular practices.

Interior silence is easier to achieve when we have external freedom from attention-demanding sounds, sights, and emotional connections. But our

capacity to turn to a “still place” within is not wholly dependent upon a noise-free environment. We have some experiences we can recall, where we have become so focused on our own thoughts that we became unaware of what was going on around us. We are capable of achieving inner silence almost anywhere, even if only for brief periods of time, but only by means of deliberate concentration. When we want to achieve inner silence, most of us benefit by literally turning off a radio, TV, or cell phones, by refraining from looking at incoming e-messages, and temporarily suspending contact with anything else in our immediate environment that might be an obstacle. We do this for reason: to become centered, to re-focus our energies, and to hear with our hearts as well as our minds.

Silence is an appropriate means for living a fully human life.