

Silence: God's First Language

As I have spoken of the importance of silence several times so far this Lent, I think it timely to revisit what I wrote in this Bulletin on October 19, 2008 about our practice of observing together two full minutes of silence after Communion. As you may recall, this practice of silence was begun here by Fr. Bob Aubrey who filled in after Fr. Harris left and before I arrived. Fr. Aubrey took his lead –which I followed - from what the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal* says about taking time for silence at different times in the Mass, seven to be exact. What the *Instruction* says about the prayer of silence comes out of our broader Christian tradition of prayer in which silence is seen as the highest form of prayer. This broader tradition says simply that *Silence is God's first language, everything else is a poor translation*, and points to silence as the first and foremost language for prayer. However, silence has precious little – if any – place either in our lives or in our prayer, much to our disadvantage. But times of silence, both *interior* and *exterior* silence, are important not only for our spiritual well being, but also for our mental and emotional health. *Exterior silence* comes simply (though not easily) when we turn off or get away from all the sound and noisemakers that daily fill our lives. *Interior silence* comes when we set aside or leave off as much as possible our inner mental activity with the intention of simply being present and available to God. The greatest significance of this prayer of silence (and our intentional silence is *itself* a prayer; we're not just praying *in* silence) is how we open ourselves to God's 'agenda' for us, rather than pursuing our own. When we try to get prayerfully quiet on the outside and the inside we join Mary in her prayer to the angel "*Let it be done to me according to your word*", and Jesus' prayer in the Garden "*Not my will, but yours be done*". The old AA saying also captures well what we are doing and why when we pray the prayer of silence: *Let go and let God!*

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.