



S S P X



Holy  
Angels  
novitiate



Silence is a valuable aid to  
virtue. In silence, God speaks  
to the soul.

—Dom Basil Hemphill, O.S.B.



# Letter from the Rector

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Summer has ended and it is time for the harvest, a time to collect our thoughts as to how we spent our time in the sun. Did we spend time in silence?

Silence is a feature of our human existence that should be treasured by all. Alas, in our modern electronic world it has almost been forgotten. Silence calls for self-control, for we have an instinct to talk, especially those with an extroverted temperament. Chattering disturbs our peace and our recollection as well as that of others. Our character, too, is molded by silence, and to be often silent can be a sign of strength and of self-control, whereas talking is frequently a sign of shallowness. We can come to find great joy through silence, and great peace. It is a type of mortification to be silent.

Silence is a valuable aid to virtue. In silence God speaks to the soul. Teaching children the joy of silence is not only an exercise in discipline but also a preparation for those who may have a religious vocation. Can we help our children to be silent? Can we help them to love silence so they can explore and enjoy reflecting on higher and deeper things? Might my little one have a vocation? Help him by respecting silence and let him think with depth.

Now talking is sometimes a duty for parents in the education and training of the youth. Certainly little ones must speak in order to form intelligible sentences and concepts. However, undisciplined children—who regularly interrupt adults, who are in conversation and demanding to be heard, insisting on their right to speak whenever they want—clearly need some training. Thus it is the duty of parents and teachers to teach children the value of silence. Help them look for a solution themselves.

In his book, *Inward Peace*, Fr. Raoul Plus, S.J. speaks of the path to peace by way of silence, which he says needs to begin from the earliest years.

He says it is unfortunate that children from their earliest years are not only not taught to pray but also not to pray in silence. Some are overwhelmed with words, but silence seems to be neglected. When a child is quiet, keep quiet yourself; do not immediately start a conversation. Give him time to think and open his mind ... as he dreams of a world beginning to open. Avoid unnecessary chatter, even when he is a baby. As soon as he can understand, use as few words as possible.

Concerning prayer, Fr. Plus says when he is able to lift his heart to God, do not overwhelm him with verbal prayer. Even before he uses words, help him to pray silently, then to dwell upon the words of his prayers and remain at peace before God. Teach him to worship rather than to petition, to contemplate and to adore: he is an artist and a poet. As he grows, teach him to act calmly and to know how to be quiet. Do not spoil him with constant attention. Teach a child to shun noise for its own sake, and avoid noise yourself, make a habit of speaking gently. Limit the radio and other noise.

As another author put it: "People are unhappy either because they forget to think of God or else because they do not forget everything else." St. Therese was asked what she did on her holidays and she answered, "I think."

No one can reach inner peace who is not capable of surrounding himself with a cloak of silence ... it is for the teacher and parent to teach the children this important point. The kingdom of God is within us (Lk. 17:21), it is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The peace of the Holy Ghost can be reached only through silence. Those who know peace are those who know how to pray, those for whom God alone matters ... God in the depths of their souls.

In this newsletter, Fr. Kenneth Dean helps us to understand the Beauty of Silence. We give a special tribute herein and congratulations to Brother Theresian, who completed an online associate degree at Minnesota State College as an Accountant Assistant. Brother will not only be caring for the accounting for the Novitiate, but will also be teaching some of the future brothers to care for the books of a priory to which they may be assigned.

As always, the brothers of the Society depend on your support. We trust in your continued support for our priests, brothers and the upkeep of our property. The brothers pray the entire rosary daily for our friends and benefactors. During this summer we had 15 men for a Vocations Retreat. Fr. John McFarland was the retreat master and it went quite well.

Finally, we have completed our new website. Please view it and recommend it to any young man.  
<https://holyangels-novitiate.com/en>

Fr. Charles Ward  
Rector



Brother Theresian, who recently completed an online associate degree at Minnesota State College as an Accountant Assistant.

---

# The Beauty of Silence

---

By Fr. Kenneth Dean

---

Not a word of his has come down to us. Not one. Yet this is one who has spoken to countless generations by the influence of his silent example. And he is honored far and wide on every continent. We speak of St. Joseph. His silent example has inspired and directed many a soul. This tells us how powerful and beautiful is the example of silence.

No one understands this power and beauty like God does. St. John of the Cross says, *“The heavenly Father has uttered only one word: it is His Son. He says it eternally and in an eternal silence. It is in the silence of the soul that it makes itself heard.”*

The unique Word of God made man brought this love of silence with Him to earth. When He spoke it was usually about His heavenly Father. When He did not speak His silence was just as powerful. We know He spoke little during His passion, sometimes even answering insincere questions with His silence. When He did speak, men were not worthy to hear His words of life. *“Blessed are ... your ears ... for, amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired ... to hear the things that you hear and have heard them not”* (Mt. 13:16-17).





He taught us, even in our speech, to say less rather than more, *“Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no; and that which is over and above these, is of evil”* (Mt. 5:37). *“And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knows what is needful for you, before you ask him”* (Mt. 6:7-8).

This love of silence has passed on into the religious orders of the Catholic Church. When visitors come to the Brothers’ Novitiate, it is the one thing that often strikes them the most: how much silence there is. Not just during prayer time, but also during work time, and especially at night and the early morning—which is called “the grand silence.” Archbishop Lefebvre understood very well that silence was needed to form priests and religious: *“Silence must be the very atmosphere of the seminary. It is the necessary condition for union with God and intellectual work. Hence to keep silence is a great act of charity towards their fellow seminarians.” “In particular, they will avoid anything which could make their work, rest, prayer, and*

*union with God more difficult. That is why they will love silence.”*

This spirit, of course, is totally opposed to that of our modern world. Pope Benedict XVI once said, *“We live in a society in which it seems that every space, every moment must be ‘filled’ with projects, activities and noise; there is often no time even to listen or to converse.”*

The power of silence is well known in the media. For them silence is a killer. Let even a couple seconds of silence slip onto the radio waves and everyone involved shouts, “Dead air! Dead air!” Meaning: “Put something on! Anything!” This curious reaction, I think, can be explained not just in the sense that time is money, but also because even with a few moments of silence the human mind can begin to reflect, and reflect on whether “this stuff” is worth listening to or not. The world under the control of the evil one must not allow people time to think or pray. But this easily happens when there is silence.



In certain places men have created rooms which are called anechoic chambers. This means “no echo” chambers. The rooms are engineered to eliminate the slightest echo and all ambient noise from outside. They are rooms of total silence. Well, nearly. It turns out that when a person goes into one of these chambers, they become the noise. What they actually hear are the sounds of their own inner organs: the heart pumping, the stomach working, and the lungs breathing. You hear your bones grind when you move. Any ringing in your ears becomes almost deafening. If you close your eyes you tend to lose your bearings and balance. Most people cannot stand to stay in an anechoic chamber for long. They have to escape the silence and themselves. This seems to me to reflect our modern age: we live in constant noise, and we cannot live without it. When we meet with real silence, we flee. And yet, silence is where we can meet God.

Pope Benedict continues: *“Dear brothers and sisters, let us not fear to create silence, within and outside ourselves, if we wish to be able not only to become aware of God’s voice but also to make out the voice of the person beside us.”* This advice echoes that of the saints. St. Ignatius remarked, *“The voice of God ... before reaching the heart ... is weak as a light breath that scarcely agitates the air. It shrinks from noise and is silent amid agitation.”* While St. Basil said, *“Quiet is the first step in our sanctification.”* For those who live in the world, this might seem to create a dilemma: Either live in a world of noise and talk and not hear the voice of God; or, be silent to hear God, and therefore, not be able to function in the world. But this is a false dilemma.

The answer, of course, lies in the balance of virtue. God expects us to do what we can, but there are also many things we cannot change; like the time and culture we live in. These we must accept. Yet, if we understand that a certain amount of silence in our life is necessary for union with God, we will make whatever efforts we can to create these moments of silence.

We must understand that there are different kinds, or levels, of silence. Firstly, there is the silence of the tongue. *“He that keeps his mouth and his tongue, keeps his soul from distress”* (Prov. 21:23). Then, there is the silence which results from

mortifying our natural activity. And lastly, there is interior silence. The first two types of silence can be imposed on us by a religious rule or a strict plan of life; but interior silence is something more challenging. This interior silence can be best described by calling it a “quieting of our faculties.” This is an effort on our part, with the help of grace, to control and quiet the noisy, distracting activity of our thoughts, and especially our imagination. This interior silence even goes to the level of our desires. A person who desires nothing but God and His will, has a most profound peace and silence in their soul.

St. John Vianney once said, *“When it’s God who is speaking ... the proper way to behave is to imitate someone who has an irresistible curiosity and who listens at keyholes. You must listen to everything God says at the keyhole of your heart.”* He would have loved the anechoic chamber.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote volumes on the topics of philosophy and theology. He was known to dictate to several secretaries simultaneously on different topics. However, at the end of his life he became strangely silent. In the middle of his treatise on the sacrament of Penance he stopped writing. *“I can write no more,”* he said. *“All that I have written seems to me nothing but straw ... compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me.”* Josef Pieper remarks on this, *“The last word of St. Thomas is not communication but silence. And it is not death which takes the pen out of his hand. His tongue is stilled by the superabundance of life in the mystery of God. He is silent, not because he has nothing further to say; he is silent because he has been allowed a glimpse into the inexpressible depths of that mystery which is not reached by any human thought or speech.”*

Let us pray to St. Joseph for this love of silence, the silence that allows the voice of God to be heard.

## An Old Rhyme

A wise old owl once sat in an oak,  
The more it heard, the less it spoke;  
The less it spoke, the more it heard.  
Why can't we be like that wise old bird?



Holy Angels Novitiate is the house of formation for the Brothers of the Society of Saint Pius X in the United States.

The Brothers of the Society are religious dedicated to the glory of God through the service of His priests. They accomplish this primarily through the observance of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience—the foundations of Catholic religious life through the centuries—by their prayers, and by their example. They also assist the priests of the Society in their apostolates in many different ways according to the needs of each individual priory. Brothers are currently engaged in teaching catechism, serving Mass, maintaining sacristies, and directing choirs. They also care for the material needs of the priests by cooking, performing maintenance, accounting, and completing innumerable small but useful tasks.

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, founder of the Society of Saint Pius X and its Brothers, recognized the dignity and value of the Brothers' vocation when he exhorted them to be the "guardian angels of our communities." It was his wish that each priory of the Society would eventually have a resident religious Brother. This wish can only be realized through the selfless response of many souls to Christ's call together with the generosity of our benefactors. God will certainly reward all of them abundantly.

#### **Donation Information**

Please make out checks or money orders in US dollars only to: "Holy Angels Novitiate."

#### **Holy Angels Novitiate**

21077 Quarry Hill Rd.,  
Winona, MN 55987  
T (507) 454-8000  
[www.sspcx.org](http://www.sspcx.org)

—Please do not send cash since this is against US Postal Regulations.

#### **Upcoming Events**

Brothers Retreat:

September 19th-26th

Taking of Vows:

In Winona, Sunday September 27th  
at 10:00 a.m.

Priests Retreat:

October 5th-10th

#### **Visit Our New Website:**

[holyangels-novitiate.com/en](http://holyangels-novitiate.com/en)