25 November 2026
ASPECTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
Part IX
"The Value of Silence"

To conclude on the topic of asceticism of the mind, let me add this: Sometimes evil thoughts may arise within us, thoughts to which we do not inwardly conform in any way, and which therefore have no hidden connection to our still-unpurified heart. They are very troublesome. We must turn away from them, pay them no further attention, and focus on what we have to do. The same applies to all involuntary, fruitless, and useless thoughts. We should let them pass us by and give them no attention.

Another element that the "disciple of the Lord" must put into practice on the path of following Christ is silence, which is also very beneficial for the ascetic discipline of the mind.

Silence is by no means a disregard for the Word, but rather the exact opposite, namely a high regard for the Word. For God brought everything into being through His divine Word. The Gospel of John states: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). Through the words *"Let there be…"* (Gen 1), the Creator brings everything into being, and everything He has made is good (Gen 1:31).

The Word, therefore, has great value in every respect. It is meant to comfort and uplift, to strengthen and proclaim the truth, to bear witness to God's blessings, and to serve one's neighbor.

But for the Word to fulfill its valuable service, it needs silence as its foundation. Silence, therefore, is not to be confused with muteness, that is, the inability to articulate oneself. Nor should it be confused with avoiding speech out of fear and insecurity. Rather, it is a conscious inner attitude from which the good Word finds its way more easily.

Silence stands in contrast to our often talkative nature, which readily expresses itself and not infrequently exhausts itself in an almost unbroken flow of speech. In doing so, what the Apostle James warns against can easily happen:

"The tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. […]. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God." (James 3:5–6, 9)

Silence must be practiced. Without this conscious practice, a person will not find inner peace and will not be able to control their tongue. Silence has the power to prevent disordered thoughts and feelings from being spoken. Instead, they are corrected within the person themselves.

Silence helps us refine our inner awareness and consciously work on our hearts. It breaks the "power of the tongue" over us, leads us from distraction to unity, and in doing so also teaches us to listen properly.

The reasons for excessive talking are many. They range from a disordered need to communicate and self-expression, through overcoming insecurity, to a childlike commentary on the visible world and one's experiences. Often, excessive talking reflects an unbridled interest in this world, vanities of the mind, and possibly also an unrefined temperament.

While in monasteries, at least in earlier times, people recognized the value of silence and practiced it, it is difficult to achieve in today's hectic world. Modern media often play a highly distracting role in this regard.

Constant accessibility via smartphones with internet connections leaves little room for silence. The often superficial communication that comes with them contributes to this problem. Silence can hardly be maintained unless one uses these means of communication very consciously.

It is silence, however, that can lead us into the depths and teach us to use words properly. Catholic churches, for example, used to be havens of silence where one primarily spoke with God or listened to Him. Increasingly, however, they are becoming places where sacred silence can no longer be found because of people's general talkativeness.

This, however, would mean the loss of a great treasure, for in silence God often communicates more deeply with the soul than in the profusion of words.

We must therefore truly seek silence, find the places where it can be more easily achieved, and create the circumstances that allow us to turn inward and leave the hustle and bustle of this world behind.

This is not easy. Anyone who has ever experienced a prolonged period of silence realizes just how much restlessness there is within oneself. Thoughts race, fantasies arise, and perhaps unresolved inner problems come to the surface, seeking to be brought before God. Inner emptiness also becomes more noticeable once the external bustle subsides.

However, if one wishes to deepen one's spiritual life, it is strongly recommended to follow the invitation to silence. Just as one should carefully guard one's times of prayer, so too should one ensure that there are times dedicated to silence and quiet prayer.

When the soul embarks on this path, it awakens more easily to the depths of its own being. It also becomes better able to discern what is important and what is less so. It gains a certain distance from what surrounds it and what flows into it.

In this way, a renewed encounter with God opens up. Once the soul has become accustomed to silence, it will naturally long for it. However, as with prayer, it requires conscious practice if it does not already correspond to our natural inclination to withdraw into silence.

Our soul is shaped by true silence and the influence of stillness and is gifted with a deeper union with God. This serves not only our own spiritual growth but also for others.

Reflection on the Daily Reading in the Novus Ordo:
https://en.elijamission.net/the-victors-over-the-beast-4/