



Prayer Service for Consecrated Life – 2nd February 2021

(You may adapt the Prayer Service as per your Parish Requirement).

Theme: Silence - that is Prophetic

Opening Hymn: Be Still and know that I am God or any suitable hymn

Prayer: We have come before you Lord today, with grateful hearts for having called us to be your own close followers. A privilege, we know that we do not deserve, but accept it whole heartedly and humbly. As we bow down before you today, we acknowledge your silent presence in our lives, that has energized and sustained our vocation, to love you and your people. We delight in our call Lord, to be instruments of your peace and love. We cherish your Love, which moves us to be witnesses of your presence in our broken world. Lord, today, accept our gratitude, feeble as it may be; our poor love and our broken lives as we bow down before you in adoration and humble submission to your will.

{Invite all to bow down before the Blessed Sacrament – exposed}

Leader: In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life, which he attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2nd

Today's feast is also known as the feast of the "**encounter**". Two pious and faithful believers in the promises of God – Simeon and Anna, **recognize** the one whom they have been **waiting and longing** for. The temple was buzzing with activity and there were scores of people jostling in and out of the temple. An obscure couple, with a tiny babe in the mother's arms had come to the temple to fulfill their duties. So ordinary and poor were they, that no one would give them a second look. No pomp, no glamour, no trumpets being sounded...while the **LIGHT of the world** was making its first entry into that sacred place. It was only Simeon and Anna, old and aged, who had spent their time searching the scriptures, knowing the promises of God, who were waiting in Hope for the Messiah and were blessed with a divine encounter.

What were they expecting? *{Pause for a few moments}*

Were they disappointed with such simplicity, such poverty, such humility and such hiddenness?
{Pause for a few moments}

NO, their hearts were SILENT and STILL and so they could see with their hearts, what no other could see.

In the SILENCE of their hearts they heard the SILENT footsteps of God entering the portals of the temple, and the JOY that filled their hearts could not be mistaken... their dark, long and empty wait was now filled with LIGHT, which only faith could reveal.

Simeon now breaks his silence and speaks up,
*"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
according to thy word;
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation
which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to thy people Israel."* [Luke 2 :29-32]

The silence is broken, and THE WORD is revealed, in the ordinary, the simple, the humble, the marginalised, the least and in the poor. The encounter is complete.

This encounter takes place in the lives all those who have been searching, longing, yearning and waiting for God. You and I sitting here have all had this encounter. **Where does this encounter first take place?** We may attribute this encounter to a person or a situation, however, if we look earnestly, this encounter first took place deep within our own being. The external reality only served to awaken a **Silent Presence** within us... Yes! we met the Lord deep within our being, which propelled... urged... inspired... us to leave the world behind and follow Him, who first looked on us with love.

Let us spend a few moments in silence to go back to that moment of my first encounter with God... {allow some time for silent prayer}

Let us renew that moment in our heart, as **we all sing**

Hymn: Lord you have touched my heart and left me speechless or any suitable hymn

Leader: Silence is Prophetic

Word of God: 1Kings 19:11-13 {Someone to read, slowly and meditatively}

Leader: God is silent and yet speaking. When God's word becomes "a sound of sheer silence", it is more efficient than ever to change our hearts. The heavy storm on Mount Sinai was splitting rocks, but God's silent word is able to break open human hearts of stone. For Elijah himself the sudden silence was probable more fearsome than the storm and thunder. The loud mighty manifestations of God were somehow familiar to him. God's silence is disconcerting, so very different from all that Elijah knew before.

Silence makes us ready for a new encounter with God. In silence, God's word can reach the hidden corners of our hearts. In silence, it proves to be "*sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit*" [Hebrews 4:21] In silence, we stop hiding before God, and the light of Christ can reach and heal and transform even what we are ashamed of.

We need silence in order to welcome the ‘Word of God’ and put it into practice. This ‘Word of God’ is always an invitation TO LOVE... *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you”* [John 15:12] May be sometimes we avoid silence and prefer the noise of our judgmental attitude, our critical nature, our biased outlook and egoistic self, so that we can remain in our comfort zone. For, real silence, if from God, shakes us out of our slumber. Real silence is risky: it makes us empty and poor, disintegrates bitterness and leads us to forgive, to accept unconditionally the other, and makes us capable of loving as God has loved me. Silence can be threatening, demanding, challenging and yet comforting... Silence is a humble yet secure path to loving.

Once I **“dare” to enter** into this ‘prophetic’ silence...

I will find the secret to that part of me that transcends space and time.

I will find the secret to that part of me that is immortal.

I will find the secret to that part of me that ... Fire cannot burn

... Water cannot quench

... Winds cannot dry

... Weapons cannot shatter

I will find that part of me... which is beyond fear

... which is without beginning and without ending

... which is divine

I will find the secret to that part of me which will continue to evolve as the universe evolves.

This is the silence that Elijah encountered, which gave him the courage to challenge the prophets of Baal, to confront the people of Israel and ask them, *“How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”* *The people did not answer him a word. [1 Kings 18:21]*

Let us for a few moments in silencelook deep within us...

Is my silence prophetic... ?*{pause in silence}*

Does my silence give me courage to do and dare what God wants me to do...? *{pause insilence}*

Does my silence make me more loving, more forgiving, more understanding, more patient, more compassionate... ?*{pause insilence}*

Does my silence help me to forget myself and reach out to another’s need...? *{pause in silence}*

Does my silence enable me to take a bold stand in favour of justice and equality...? *{pause in silence}*

Does my silence empower me to walk the extra mile... to give till it hurts...? *{pause insilence}*

Does my silence make me ready to suffer persecution for Christ’s sake...?

{pause insilence}

If we can answer at least some of these questions positively, then with great joy for our calling to the consecrated life, we shall stand and sing...

Hymn: God's spirit is in my heart or any suitable hymn

All sit OR kneel

Let us now place before the Lord all our prayers and intentions

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

- We pray for those who are consecrated to God by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. May they always reveal the love of Christ to those they encounter and continue to enrich our world by their lives of prayer. We pray to the Lord.
- That the life and mission of the men and women in consecrated life be a means of sanctification for them and for building up the kingdom of God. We pray...
- For those who have responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to be a consecrated person that they may experience the support of the Church as they continue their growth in holiness. We pray...
- We pray for all those who are discerning their vocation in life and those whom the Lord is calling to the consecrated life. May they be given the wisdom to hear God's call and the courage to respond generously and lovingly. We pray...
- For all who actively support the promotion of vocations to the consecrated life and priesthood that they may see the fruit of their efforts in a rich harvest of vocations. We pray...
- That many young women and men will be open to Jesus' call to consecrated life to serve the many needs of the Church and the world. We pray...
- For all men and women preparing for the consecrated life or priesthood, that their days of formation be filled with joy, peace and the certainty of God's love. We pray...
- For the release of Fr. Stan Swamy and all those consecrated persons who have been unjustly put in prison and are suffering persecution in various parts of the world. That God may strengthen their faith and keep close to them in this hour of trial. We pray.

{Give some time for spontaneous prayer}

Let us place all our prayers, those expressed aloud and those deep within us, into the Sacred Heart of Jesus and say together

Our Father...

Leader: Mary, our mother was a 'Silent Prophet' par-excellence. She accepted God's word in faith and trust and thereafter carried Him, not just in her womb, but much more in heart, wherever she went. She became the first living tabernacle, whose silent presence spoke louder than words.

At the temple, as she presented Jesus to the Almighty, she silently pondered on the words of Simeon to her, “*This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.*” **Luke 2:34-35.** Silent but courageous, Mary accepted the “sword”, as part of God’s plan for her and stood by Jesus till His last breath on the Cross.

When Mary sensed a human need, her silence broke into words “*Do whatever he tells you*”. She continues to tell us today... “*Do whatever He tells you*”. Let us ask our mother to accompany us on this difficult but beautiful journey as **we say together... HAIL MARY, full of grace....**

Concluding Prayer: Loving Father, we believe that you have created us for some definite purpose. We may not always understand it, but we know that sometimes even through apparent failures you bring your work in us to fruition. Teach us Lord to trust your silent presence with us and help us to hear your silent footsteps in the needy, the poor, the least and the lost. May we cooperate with your grace to be your prophet and speak your word with courage and peace. We make this prayer, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Concluding Hymn: We are God’s people or any suitable hymn

{few moments of complete silence, to bow down before the Lord.}

Tantum Ergo, {while the Blessed Sacrament is placed inside}.

*Written on behalf
Of
The Commission For Liturgy
Archdiocese of Bombay
By
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