

Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare
Saginaw, MI

The Gift of Silence

When I was young, I did not like silence. It made me feel lonely. I hurried to fill up any quiet times with the noise of chatter, TV, radio, or music. However, now I find moments of silence bring me peace, refresh my spirit, and give me a blessed awareness of God's presence in my life. Now I find that silence is a gift.

We may be surprised when we realize how little silence we experience in our lives.

As we go about our daily routines, we are usually surrounded by noise everywhere. People talking, traffic rumbling along, TV blaring, and telephones ringing are all some of the sounds in our lives. This noise can take its toll on us. My mother used to say to us kids, "I need my quiet time to hear myself think."

She was right. We do need to make time to "hear ourselves think." When we begin to hear our thoughts we can then move from busy thinking to a deeper place of peace. However, making silence a part of our lives is not always easy. When I set aside a time of quiet for myself, I notice that my mind is continually thinking, thinking, thinking. I find myself going over past events, often retelling events so that they come out in my favor. Why did I do that? What should I have done instead? What would have happened if I had done this rather than that? I then often begin to dream about the future and imagine things that are not possible and will never be as

I imagine. I find myself restless. I am tempted to move about, to get myself coffee or something to eat. I think of all the tasks of the day that need to be done. Our minds are endlessly active. I try to wait out this restlessness and just be still until my mind calms down.

And when my mind slowly calms, something quite remarkable happens. Somehow I am able to let go of this endless noisy thinking.

I can let go of this concern about past and future. And when this happens, I find myself resting in the present moment. This present moment is all any of us have; yet we run from it by choosing busy activities and busy thinking.

Once our mind finds quiet in the present moment, stillness can come, and with the stillness comes great peace. In the present moment, I find myself at rest with myself and with the world. I notice the sounds of birds, of wind, and of rain. I hear the sounds of radiators in our old house. The world comes alive with sounds of life that I often miss in my busyness. Words and busy thinking are no longer needed. Sometimes I'm drawn deeper into a place of peace. Finding this deep place of quiet doesn't always happen, but when it does I notice it. I find myself grateful to God. I find myself aware of God's presence. It is a time of prayer. It is the gift of silence.

Sr. Laura and the Sisters of St. Clare

The GIFT of *Silence*