

Silence – a reflection by Sr Gabriel Davison

A few weeks before the beginning of Lent my community decided that we wanted to live in a deeper way the silence we try to inhabit throughout our day. I live in a contemplative Poor Clare community, where we try to foster an atmosphere of silence in our daily life. We decided that during Lent we would have a thought for each day around the theme of silence and have it read it out at the end of dinner. It seemed a good time in the day to refocus our mind and heart on the essentials of what we want to live and to help us begin the afternoon in a spirit of communion. A couple of days ago I shared with the community this thought from Pope Francis: *“Silence entails self-emptying in order to grow in receptivity; interior noise makes it impossible to welcome anyone or anything”*.

I share this with you because often we think that silence is about “not talking” or not doing something. However, Pope Francis says it entails self-emptying which is very much about doing something. Emptying the self - what does that mean..... when we empty something, like a bin, it is so that we can make space for something more. So before even I can be silent, I need to empty my bin so that I can create a space to be.... receptive as Pope Francis says.

At this moment of great anxiety and fear as we live and cope with our changing circumstances of living with this Covid 19 Virus, there may be a lot of interior noise going on inside of you. Our streets are empty, the shops and pubs are closed there is a silence... but it is not a creative silence, it is like the silence of death. The silence that Pope Francis speaks of however is something quite different. **It is the silence of communion, of solidarity, of peace, of waiting, of suffering together this great pain. It is a silent hope that we will come through this and will be a better people for it.**

So I invite you, as I do myself, to listen to your interior noise, to your fears, anxieties, worries, doubts and hold this pain and listen to it. Until we know what we are holding inside of us we can't lay it down and so the noise inside of us continues. Putting a name on how we feel can create a calmness, a space, a silence, so that we are then able to listen. The purpose of course is not to create a vacuum but to make a space, a space first to welcome myself as I am, then to welcome the other, to welcome Jesus. We wait, we are silent, we are open, we are receptive, and we can welcome Jesus into our lives. He is waiting, always waiting, to welcome us, to speak a word to us in our silence.

During these days when we are more confined to our homes, take this time as a precious gift, a time to live a deeper silence in your life. May this silence nourish your soul so that you may meet the person of Jesus who says to you and me *“Make your home in me as I make mine in you”*.

Try not to think of yourself as isolated or alone during this pandemic for in this place of silence, you are in a deep communion with all your brothers and sisters and with Jesus himself who says to us *“come to me all you who labour and overburdened and I will give you rest.”*