

## **A Monastic Mass in the Spirit of Silence**

*Before our mass begins you are encouraged to reflect upon the following words*

**“you can hear the footsteps of God when silence reigns”**

(a theme taken from the prayers of the Desert Mothers and Fathers)

### **Musical Offering (Cantor)**

#### **Narrator: A Meditation on Silence**

Silence has long been understood as an important step in spiritual development. The scriptures encourage silence. “Be still and know that I am God (Ps 46.10)” is a powerful verse when we understand these words as being personally spoken to us by God. “Listen to me in silence (Isa 41.1)” is another such verse as well as “Be still before the Lord (Ps 37.7).

We can respond by saying “It is good to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it (Lam.3.27-28)” or by saying “For God alone my soul waits (Ps 62.1)” or “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits (Ps 130.5)” as ways of heeding to God’s encouragement to be silent.

During our service, we will be silently asked to be silent between prayers and chants in order to reflect on what was just voiced. So, let our sounds and silence be intertwined—let our sounds bring silence and let our silence bring sounds.

### **A period of reflective silence follows**

#### **Celebrant:**

“Be still and know that I am God (Ps 46.10)” are words that should encourage us to “let go” and surrender ourselves to the divine presence. Therefore, let us quiet our thoughts and desires and further center ourselves in God’s presence. There is an ancient

spiritual saying that quotes God as follows “You will never be able to hear my words if you cannot first hear my silence.” Let our periods of silence move us beyond conversation with God and into an intimate voiceless communion.

### **A period of reflective silence follows**

**Cantor:** Sings once then everyone joins in the meditative petition

My spirit is longing for you, my God;  
My spirit is waiting in hope.  
My spirit is longing for you, my God;  
My spirit is waiting in hope.

### **Vespers**

*Our monastic mass will continue with the ancient divine prayer office of **Vespers** which is a time when the heavens fade from light to darkness and when we transition from day to night. We will use the ancient monastic practice of the antiphon for our Vesper prayers in order to accentuate the fundamental reflection of our prayers as we repeat it for emphasis.*

### **The Lighting of Candles (Acolyte lights sanctuary candles)**

**Celebrant:**

Almighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us,  
as daylight fades, with the brightness of the vesper light;  
and we implore you of your great mercy that,  
as you enfold us with the radiance of this light,  
so you would shine into our hearts  
the brightness of your Holy Spirit;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Cantor:** sings the Phos Hilaron

The **Phos Hilaron** is the earliest known Christian hymn recorded outside of the scriptures that is still being used today and is generally sung during the lighting of lamps or candles.

O Radiant Light,  
O Holy Glory of God  
the immortal blessed Father in heaven,  
O Christ Jesus!  
Now as the sunset comes upon us  
and we see the evening lights,  
we praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!  
It is right at all times to sing your praise  
with all the universe,  
O Son of God:  
You are the life of the world.

**A brief period of reflective silence follows**

### **The Lighting of the Incense**

**Acolyte:** lights incense

#### **Psalm 141**

**Cantor:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,  
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation. (Ps  
141.2)

**All:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,  
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

**Cantor:** O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me.  
Hear my voice when I call to you. (v.1)  
Like incense, may my prayer rise before you O God,  
the lifting of my hands like an evening oblation. (v. 2)  
But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD;  
in you I take refuge. (v.8)

**All:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,  
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

**A brief period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:** Let Us Stand

**Psalm 113**

**Cantor:** From the rising of the sun to / its \ setting;  
the name of the Lord is / to \ be / praised. (v. 3).

**All:** From the rising of the sun to / its \ setting;  
the name of the Lord is / \ be / praised. (v. 3).

**Cantor:** Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord;  
praise the name of the Lord.  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
from this time on and forevermore.  
From the rising of the sun to its setting  
the name of the Lord is to be praised.  
The Lord is high above all nations,  
and his glory above the heavens. (vv. 1-4)

**All:** From the rising of the sun to / its \ setting;  
the name of the Lord is / to \ be / praised. (v. 3).

**Cantor:** Who is like the Lord our God,  
who is seated on high,  
who looks far down on the heavens and the earth.  
He raises the poor from the dust,  
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,  
to make them sit with princes,  
with the princes of his people (vv. 5-8).

**All:** From the rising of the sun to / its \ setting;  
the name of the Lord is / \ be / praised. (v. 3).

**Everyone sits and a period of reflective silence follows**

**Psalm 37**

**Cantor:** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for (your God) (v.7).

**All:** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for (your God) (v.7).

**Cantor:**

Trust in the LORD and do good;  
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.  
Delight yourself in the LORD  
and God will give you the desires of your heart.  
Commit your way to the LORD;  
trust in God and God will do this:  
(vv 3-5).

**All:** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for (your God) (v.7).

**Cantor:**

The Lord will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,  
the justice of your cause like the noonday sun;  
For the LORD loves the just  
and will not forsake his faithful ones.  
the righteous will inherit the land  
and dwell in it forever.  
(v. 6; 28a; 29)

**All:** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for (your God) (v.7).

**A brief period of reflective silence follows**

## Centering Prayer

### **Narrator:** The Practice of Centering Prayer

Centering prayer is a popular method of silent contemplative prayer that places a strong emphasis on interior silence. Modern authors of books about centering prayer note that its roots are in the contemplative prayers of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Guidelines for centering prayer have evolved and focus on four primary activities that you are now encouraged to practice. While centering prayer is encouraged to be a spiritual practice of more than just a few minutes at a time, let us take a few minutes to practice this ancient spiritual tradition.

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed, relax, and quiet yourself;
2. Choose and focus on a sacred word that best supports your desire to be in God's presence – your sacred word could be a name for God such as Mother, Father, Abba, Yahweh, or Adonai – your sacred word could also be a spiritual state or condition such as silence, stillness, peace, calm, or patience;
3. Let your sacred word be gently present as your symbol of your desire to be in God's presence and open to God's presence within you;
4. Whenever you become aware of anything (thoughts, noise, feelings, perceptions, images, etc.) do not engage them and simply return to your sacred word.

### **A period of reflective silence follows**

### **Narrator:** A Brief Homily about Silence

Thomas Merton in his book entitled Contemplative Prayer (p. 90) noted that we often expect silence to be a medium, method, or manner that results in hearing God speak to us. In other words, while we are silent we expect God to break the silence with words. However, he believed that silence is the message and not the medium, method, or manner of communication. There is deep

communion and communication between God and us through silence and words will only obscure this union.

Other spiritual teachers have noted that “you can hear the footsteps of God when silence reigns” and thus you may hear the footsteps of God when your silence reigns. Other spiritual teachers have taught that the sensations that one feels on the surface of your skin while silent can be healing when felt as a touch from God.

Silence is surely an experience with God without equal. The seventh century Syrian monk Isaac of Ninevah encouraged us and prayed for us concerning this matchless experience. He wrote

Silence will illuminate you in God... and deliver you from phantoms of ignorance. Silence will unite you to God.... In the beginning we have to force ourselves to be silent. But then from our very silence is born something that draws us into deeper silence. May God give you an experience of this 'something' that is born of silence."

## **A period of reflective silence follows**

### **Lectio Divina: A Dialogue with God**

#### **Celebrant:**

The practice of Lectio Divina involves dialoguing with God in prayer by hearing scripture as God speaking and responding with related thoughts and words to what God said. Let us hear God speaking to us and let us respond with related thoughts and words.

#### **Cantor:**

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth (Ps 46. 10);"

**All:** Dear God, we will be still and know that you are God and you will be exalted among the nations and you will be exalted in the earth.

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Cantor:**

"Many listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel" (and) "my words fell gently on their ears." (Job 29. 21; 22b)

**All:** Dear God, we will listen to you expectantly and wait in silence for your counsel and may your words fall gently on our ears.

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Cantor:**

"Be still before the LORD and wait patiently" (and) "I will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun." (Ps 37.7,6);"

**All:** Dear God, we will be still before you and wait patiently and make our righteousness shine like the dawn and the justice of our cause like the noonday sun.

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Cantor:** sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

Wait for the Lord,  
Whose day is near.  
Wait for the Lord:  
keep watch, take heart  
(Ps 27.14)

**A period of reflective silence follows**

## The Nicene Creed

**Celebrant:** Let us stand and profess our faith together by reciting the Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Everyone sits and a period of reflective silence follows**

**Eucharist Begins**

**An Examination of Consciousness:**

**Narrator:**

The Examination of Consciousness is an ancient spiritual practice that was promoted by St. Ignatius of Loyola in order to help us discern and reflect on God's daily activity in our life including today. For St. Ignatius, discernment is rooted in the understanding that God is ever at work in our lives – inviting, directing, guiding and drawing us into the fullness of life – and we need to take time to respond.

**Celebrant:**

Let us ask God to help us examine ourselves by silently asking, reflecting on, and waiting for God to answer our following questions:

**Celebrant:** God, have I listened to you expectantly and waited in silence for your counsel?

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:** God, what words fell gently on my ears that I did not hear?

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:** God, what cause of justice do you want to shine like the noonday sun?

**A period of reflective silence follows**

## An Examination of Conscience:

**Celebrant:** The scriptures encourage us to examine ourselves before Holy Communion. Let us reflect upon the following words of Christ and our desire to fulfill these words

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'"<sup>1</sup>

## A brief period of reflective silence.

**Celebrant:** Let us pray

**All:** Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

**Cantor:** sings once then everyone joins in the following meditative petition Kyrie eleison/Christe eleison (Lord have mercy/Christ mercy)

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison  
Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison  
Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22.37-39

**Celebrant:**

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All:** Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

**Celebrant:**

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

**The Breaking of the Bread**

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.

**Celebrant:** Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

**All:** Therefore let us keep the feast

**Celebrant:** The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

***NOTE: Everyone is invited to take communion.***

**Cantor:** sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

Eat this bread, drink this cup,  
Come to me and never be hungry.  
Eat this bread, drink this cup,  
Trust in me and you will not thirst.

## **The Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Celebrant:** Let us stand and pray

**All:**

Holy, gracious and loving God, you have drawn us to your heart, and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink, the body and Blood of Christ. Now send us forth to be your people in the world, and to proclaim your truth, this day and evermore. Amen.

**Celebrant:**

We are now experiencing an increasing period of darkness which began last month and lasts through December. Our days are growing shorter and our nights longer. May the coming weeks be a time of deep inner reflection. May you take time out for periods of silence and listen to the silence. And may you hear the footsteps of God and feel the healing touch of God when your silence reigns.

**Celebrant:**

Let us also remember to pray for others during our increasing period of seasonal darkness and let us now pray together:

Dear God,  
Rest your weary ones  
Feed your hungry ones  
Touch your worried ones  
Soothe your wounded ones  
Caress your dying ones  
And gently kiss each and every one of them.  
- Amen -

**Celebrant:** Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

**Everyone is Invited  
for Light Refreshments Next Door.**

**Afterwards, Everyone is Invited  
to a No-Host Dinner at a Local Restaurant**

**Acknowledgements:**

The Rev. Pat O'Reilly, Celebrant  
Thomas LaFrance, Cantor  
Sofia Herrera, PhD, Acolyte  
Joe Colletti, PhD, Liturgy