

THE WORKER SISTERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



BULLETIN



THE WORKER BROTHERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



SILENCE
March 2021

Bulletin Cover

View of the Blue Mountains Australia, Photo by Hans Braxmeier - Pixabay

Imagine the stillness and silence at the top of a mountain peak.

.....
Community Communication Contacts:

Prayer Requests and News Notes for the monthly Bulletin - email Br. Ephrem, aperydesign@gmail.com or see green sheets for his mailing address.

Changes of address, phone numbers, email addresses - email Sr. Christine casturges@gmail.com or Sr. Wendy Samuel virtue54@outlook.com or see green sheets for mailing addresses.

Urgent Community Prayer Requests for email distribution – email or call Sr. LaVerne Peter: Callaghgan@aol.com, Sr. Christine: casturges@gmail.com or Sr. Wendy Samuel: virtue54@outlook.com

Financial Contributions –

Members residing in the U.S., make checks payable to WSHS/WBHS and mail to:
Sr. Nancy Teresa, WSHS, Treasurer, United States, 12900 Glenwood Street, Apt. 108, Overland Park, KS 66209

If you pay any bills through your bank, you can easily send your contributions to WSHS the same way. Use the address above to send your check. You can make a one-time payment or a recurring payment. If you have questions, your bank will be happy to help you. And - you don't need any postage!

Members residing in Canada, make cheques payable to WSHS/WBHS and mail to Br. David, WBHS, Treasurer, Canada. 2170 Preston Road, Cavan Monaghan, Ontario, K9J 0G5 Canada

Contributions to Haiti Clean Water Project –

Check contributions to the Haiti Clean Water Project may be mailed to Sr. Alexandra Francis, WSHS 7711 E Waverly Street, Tucson, AZ 85715.

Please make your check payable to Alexandra Zarris. Put “WSHS Haiti Clean Water” in the memo line.

Problems Receiving your Bulletin - If you are not receiving the monthly Bulletin (by regular mail or by email), please email or call **Sr. Christine, not Trina.** Thank you.

If a friend expresses interest in WSHS/WBHS, remember to direct them to our website, www.workersisters.org, www.workerbrothers.org

THE WORKER SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	
Web Addresses: workersisters.org workerbrothers.org	
Trina Avedisian, Friend, WSHS	Layout & Design WSHS/WBHS Bulletin
Sr. Sharron Magdalene, WSHS	Proof Reader
Contributing Staff	
Br. Ephrem, WBHS	News Notes and Prayer List
Shirley Pace, WSHS	Calendar
Sr. Christine, WSHS	Co-Director
Sr. Wendy Samuel, WSHS	Co-Director
Community Marketing Group, LLC, Publisher Port Huron, MI Copyright 2021	
Illustrations by M. Lourdes Vinas, O.S.B. from Our Father St. Benedict Sr. M. Regina Goberna, O.S.B. (New City Press, NY, 1983) Reprinted with permission	

No part of this publication may be produced, transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or translated into any language or computer language, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, magnetic, optical, chemical, manual or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the The Worker Sisters of the Holy Spirit, 9221 Creekside Trail, Stone Mountain, GA 30087.



CALENDAR

**CORPORATE COMMUNIONS
MARCH 2021**

CORPORATE COMMUNIONS

Corporate Communion and meetings are held monthly where members are within physical proximity of each other. Currently these gatherings are taking place in the following locations. For more information, please contact the Community member listed below.

Ontario, Canada
 Kansas City, MO USA
 Carthage MO USA
 Pleasant Hill, TN USA
 Western Regional USA
 Illinois USA
 Southern Regional, USA

Br. David, WBHS
 Sr. Dorothy Cecilia, WSHS
 Sr. Barbara Veronica, WBHS
 Sr. Janeen Julian, WSHS
 Ginny Berkey, WSHS
 Sr. Diane Richard, WSHS
 Sr. Kathleen Rachel, WSHS

CORPORATE COMMUNIONS FOR 2020

March 27

April 24 • May 21 • June 26

July 24 • August 27 • September 24

October 22 • November 20 • December 11

RETREAT 2021

Lord Teach Us To Pray

Online Retreat - Zoom Sessions

April 29 – May 1, 2021

Call to Prayer. Please remember our Community in prayer twice a day 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM in your time zone and pray for World Peace at Noon.



8:00 AM - Prayer for our Community
 12:00 Noon - Prayer for World Peace
 5:00 PM - Prayer for our Community



FROM YOUR DIRECTORS

RECEIVING MONTHLY BULLETINS VIA EMAIL

WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH THE BULLETIN! For those of you who still receive the *Bulletin* as 'snail mail' through the post office, we would deeply appreciate it if you could choose to receive it as an email. The problems with printing and mailing the bulletin are many: the cost of paper, large envelopes and postage is mounting rapidly. We are paying Pitney Bowes \$200/month for the lease of a postage machine. Pitney Bowes is very difficult to contact or to work with. If we could decrease the number of printed and mailed *Bulletins*, Trina (who puts our *Bulletin* into its final form) has agreed to mail out a few *Bulletins* each month. And a benefit: THE EMAILED BULLETINS ARE IN COLOR! Please contact Sr. Christine (970-219-5855) (casturges@gmail.com) should you desire to make a change (and please include your email address if it needs to be updated.)

MEMBER UPDATE

Linda Abel has decided to withdraw from Worker Sisters of the Holy Spirit. She was given a letter of dispensation releasing her from her life time commitment to WSHS. Our prayers and best wishes go with Linda.

ONLINE RETREAT 2021 – REMEMBER TO REGISTER!

Our ZOOM Retreat 2021 dates are: Thursday, April 29 – Saturday, May 1, 2021. The registration fee is \$50. As we stated last month, given the hardship that the Covid pandemic has caused many people, especially those out of work as a direct result of the virus, all registration fees will be on a donation only basis. Donations received help cover the costs of Retreat materials and Speaker fee.

Make check payable to WSHS/WBHS/Send your name, address and check to:

- **Canadians:** Br. David, WBHS, 2170 Preston Road, Cavan Monaghan, Ontario K9J 0G5 Canada
- **Americans:** Sr. Nancy Teresa, WSHS, 12900 Glenwood St, Bldg 19 #108, Overland Park, Kansas 66209



SPIRITUAL SHARING

I often wonder how much I am called to do. How bold am I called to be? I tend to live my faith not by impassioned preaching, rather by example, and I wonder if that is enough. It's certainly my most comfortable way of living, and I can hear my mom saying that God doesn't always call us to be comfortable!! Sometimes we have to be daring. When I was two, I wanted to be a bull fighter (that's daring) and I think part of that spirit still lives in me. But part

of it knows how dangerous the bull is and wisely stays outside the arena. It's tough to know sometimes what God wants, what he expects. Especially when people all over the place are using "God's plan" or "God's will" in so many unhealthy and hurtful ways. I question the idea of really knowing either.

I'd like to be more intentional this Lent about prayer, and I am excited this is our theme this year. Although I truly love to be in prayer, I find that I often forget to do it. I used to wear a prayer bracelet with textured beads (kind of like a rosary) that I could take off and hold and each one was for something different to pray about. Maybe I'll dig that up and try to be more intentional. It's so calming and such a wonderful way to feel connected to God.

I feel that the Disciples thought that their prayers weren't what Jesus had expected. They, and a lot of people today, think that they have to have a deep Theological Prayer. They are unable to pray openly for others or for themselves, because they think that their prayers are not what God/Jesus wants or is not perfect. Jesus gave a guide that is good for everybody, but it was not meant to be the only way that we are to pray to God.

I look forward to the coming year's theme. For me, prayer is above all, a relationship with "the ground of my being". Like any relationship, I am sometimes more present than at other times. Relationships that are strong and deep take time. I am not always fully present to God's gentle presence.

Unlike most relationships this one is always welcoming of me when I pause and lift up my heart; and it is forgiving of me when I do not take the time. I believe prayer can be words, daily actions, and definitely silence. The words are not what is important, it is the intent of my heart to just be in this presence. Prayer is most real for me when I am able to be truthful about where I am in that moment.

I believe prayer is union with God. Prayer doesn't even have to be words or contemplation! It can simply be changing dirty diapers, rushing a patient to the hospital, sitting with a friend, or healing from an illness. Simply being alive and aware of the Presence of God in and around us is prayer. The form doesn't matter, the love between both parties does.

There have been long periods of my life where I simply don't have any words to say during prayer. Instead, I simply light a candle and sit in the presence of God. It isn't necessarily that I can't find the words to say, but more of a desire to achieve inner silence, rest in God, and contemplate the Mystery of it all. There have also been many phases of my life where I need to vent my frustrations, to speak the hurts that plague me, or my heart just overflows with joy and I can't stop myself from singing God's praises. I consider all of these things are prayer.

Prayer is the way I am able to have a relationship with my God. I often wish I had a little red phone that would ring, and it would be God calling me to give me guidance, and counseling in my times of decisions and actions. I spend lots of time in The Word and find that God often speaks to me through the scriptures as well as nudging and planting ideas in my head. Because God is my Almighty, Friend, Companion, Counselor, and so much more, I seem to feel free to just converse with Him about almost everything. My favorite Psalm is 46 :10 – "Be still and know I am the Lord". That tells me to work on trying to do more listening and shut out all those thoughts that keep coming into my brain when I am trying to hear my God. If I did not have God to talk to about my problems, I would feel lost,

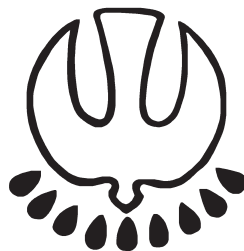
as He is always there, and I know I can always trust in Him. I am working on trying to commit each day to seeing His work at hand and offering myself to be available for whatever He needs me to do to help Him.

I like that we are going to be studying prayer this year. What a vital lifegiving subject. In EFM one of the books I have been reading says that Jesus is Prayer. He showed us how to pray throughout his ministry. He taught prayer and embodied it. I think of the different ways to express prayer. Some are harder for me. But prayer is a conversation with God. We do it in many ways. If done with intention, everything can be prayer. Walking the labyrinth, making meals, cleaning the house, playing with the dogs, listening with our heart. So many ways we can pray. But I think you need to be present, to act with intention, to take time to LISTEN. God always answers prayers, and no is an answer. God yearns for us to be with Him and prayer is such a gift to bring this about.

I think this year of quarantine has been a gift of answered prayer. It has forced me to stop, think and reflect. I have not been busy doing other things to avoid the reflection. I discovered I can be quiet and think though sometimes the quiet makes me restless. In some things I do not want to go back to the busyness of avoiding reflection for I think that has been my pattern. My prayer life has changed in the last year. I am more reflective and I see the need and joy of this. I am excited to spend more time developing a richer prayer life. Bring it on!

I think prayer is just the basis of life for me. I find I am thinking about someone or something and I pray for them or the situation. Often, I contact the person and discover they had been thinking of me!! Isn't the Holy Spirit amazing. I am being very attentive at present to what I am thinking. It is helping. This helps me live as a prayer, taking my faith with me and living it as best I can. I am feeling happier about myself. I fit my own life better. I am not so on edge.

“Who do you say that I am”. We are all challenged to reflect for a season on what our own answer to this question from Jesus will be. But suddenly I was in a new conversation with Jesus about this question. Now I was asking. I was the one whispering to Jesus “Who do YOU say I am, Jesus?” - “Who do YOU say I am to continue to become?” *A child of God, an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven, my beloved daughter.* The answer was so full of love and compassion and delight in me as a child of God, I was overwhelmed by this moment of Grace and encouragement.





FORMATION AND TRAINING

What does the Bible say about Silence?

By

Sr. Arlie Mirren, WSHS



Sr. Arlie Mirren lives Queensland, Australia. She was admitted as a Worker in April 2002.

How blessed we are to have been given the opportunity to study prayer in its many forms this year. This month we will consider the gifts that silence and stillness bring to our prayers, as written of in the Bible. There are some particular ways of praying that rely on silence or even use silence as prayer. We'll see what the Psalmist and others wrote about silence, as a way to develop a relationship with God and with ourselves. They are actually the same path. And remember Elijah finding God in a gentle whisper, after the noise of the wind and fire? That's available to us.

In Psalm 46:10, the Psalmist records God saying 'Be still and know that I am God'. This is a rock solid statement. It describes the relationship we can have with our Creator. But how do we receive it? What do we do about it? How do we remain still so we can know God? It needs our silence and stillness to hear God's words. It is a growth process, isn't it? We need to be quiet and still to hear in the beginning and then it requires our willingness to return to that state to hear more. Silence and stillness enhance our ability to listen.

Further, the psalms instruct us to variously be silent and not be silent. In Psalm 32:3 we see the experience of someone who tried to hide sin by keeping silent and then ended up very unwell. He or she needed to face themselves and repent of the sins by speaking to God. Other psalms make a plea to God not to keep silent against injustice. (Ps 35:22 and 83:1) In another, God uses silence to chide. (50:21). There are different uses for different times. We all know this. I have used the 'silent treatment' to express my displeasure but I also have raised my voice (no silence anywhere) to make sure no one mistook my anger for something else!!

In Psalm 94:17 we find the story of someone who was at his wits' end and who then expresses gratitude for God saving him from the silence of death. This is not necessarily physical death. Most of us know the dreadful experience of being misrepresented, so that our deepest lives seem threatened. At worst, nothing we say can fix it. We are condemned to silence, unless we turn to God. This is an example of terrible injustice. It is used to discredit so much – governments, religions, people in all sorts of circumstances. We need silence to 're-group' and step away from our prejudices and rigid mind sets.

We turn to the Gospels to understand how Jesus used silence. The forty days he spent in the wilderness must have offered almost overwhelming silence for him. Spending all that time alone must have been a great test. We have read that this was in preparation for beginning his ministry. I imagine Jesus was able to 'get in touch with himself'. He realised his divinity as well as his humanity. He probably sifted and sorted to get a clear picture of what God wanted from him and how that was to unfold. He sought the impetus to get started and sought trust to put his hand in God's hand and just move forward.

Cynthia Bourgeault quotes Thomas Merton in her book, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. She is talking about this 'divine indwelling'; the state of being Jesus carried. Merton says that 'at the centre of our being is a point of nothingness, a point of pure truth'... 'which belongs entirely to God and is never at our disposal'. 'This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God, written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our sonship'. Surely Jesus used his silence to search for that point of indigence; of absolute dependence on God. How courageous was Jesus? One of the most beautiful hymns is, 'Dear Lord and father of Mankind', by John Greenleaf Whittier. My favourite verse talks about this relationship between Jesus and his Father. It says, 'O Sabbath rest by Galilee, O calm of hills above, **where Jesus knelt to share with thee, the silence of eternity, interpreted by love**'. It makes me shiver to think of that bond.

Sr LaVerne Peter wrote of the disciples asking Jesus to teach them how to pray, when he returned to them after a time of solitary silence. They experienced first-hand how Jesus behaved and thought and they wanted the same gifts. They had begun to 'catch on' to how silence worked for Jesus.

Matthew tells us Jesus silenced the leaders of the day by challenging them to step away from the Law and the social mores of the day. (Matt 22:34-45) He challenged them to think laterally and recognise the relational necessity for truly following love's rules. (God's dream) He told us how love overcomes everything else in life – and death. I know how frightening it can be to accept and make change in our lives. Jesus can be frightening. He wakes us up to reality, something humans avoid! If we can be still, he will provide answers. He brings us the results of time he spent in silence.

Then we have the agonising time Jesus spent in prayer in the garden, just before he was arrested. He must have needed that silence to calm and strengthen himself and to assure himself of God's love. We read what he said to his Father, pleading for another way for his life to go. But he was committed to his way, his total loving, accepting way and there was no other choice. Jesus 'let go' the ultimate possession, his life. Fancy the stress that makes Jesus sweat blood. Poor darling, here was his humanity at its rawest, to say nothing of the absolute humility of his following death. Thank you, Jesus.

I wrote earlier of Centring Prayer. Fr. Thomas Keating claims that using 'centring prayer' is the best way to receive God's love! I have read his book *Open Heart, Open Mind*, as well as Cynthia Bourgeault's book mentioned above and use them with a group that meets twice each month to practice this form of prayer. The members of our group have noticed changes in themselves as well as in the others. It takes a bit of practice to get used to it and that keeps us humble.

I will not go into the practice too much but I encourage you to at least read about it and, possibly, try it. It is not a passive practice. It requires an alert mind and commitment. The mind wanders, however everyone has a 'grounding' word or phrase. The moment you realise your mind has wandered, you use

the word or phrase and bring yourself back to silence. Fr. Keating says not to be disappointed with yourself for slipping into outside thought. He says it is wonderful to bring yourself back all those times and to relate to God in humility for our perfectly human traits.

Another fabulous way to harness silence is *Lectio Divina*. I recommend the book we read as part of our training, *Lectio Divina*, by Basil Pennington. Give yourself a good amount of silent time so you can really do the meditation deeply. One reads a passage of the Bible several times, with silence between each reading. A short sentence is chosen, usually it is not difficult to choose. A few words often ‘jump’ out at you. Then you meditate on those few words and see what relevance they have for you today. I also gather with others for *Lectio Divina* and we laugh at how we do find relevance for our lives in these ancient scriptures. I encourage you to ‘give it a go’, as we say down here. My practice of both Centring Prayer and *Lectio Divina* bring me great delight.

We have some instances in the Bible that speak of awe. Something happens that catches your focus, so that you are left silent. Acts 15:12 speaks of the ‘assembly’ remaining silent while Paul and Barnabas talk of miracles and wonders. Later on, in Ch 22: 1-2, Paul astonishes a crowd by speaking in Aramaic and the crowd remained silent. Giving ourselves room to be silent can engender wonder and awe. We see differently. We can step sideways. ‘Things’ are no longer as important as they once were. At my age, I am trying to loosen my hold on ‘stuff’. Most of it is lovely stuff but no longer has a place in my day-to-day life. Sometimes it is very, very hard to let go. Time in silence gradually opened my ears further to how I can live at this time of my life. Letting go of past hurts is hard. They have become part of my persona! A part that needs to go, so I can let more of God’s love through. I am progressing.

Paul writes about women being silent and that idea has been part of our culture and, even now, flourishes all over the world. Paul was a man of his time and culture. He was also very well-schooled in the Law. That is how his mind worked and although I could grind my teeth at times, I must remember Paul brought us wonderful messages from God. Many, many of us no longer think it is disgraceful for women to speak in church and, dare I say, not to say we will obey our husband in everything, when our own intelligence tells us that we can make good decisions. I particularly like the words in 1 Peter 2:15 that give us courage to do good so as to silence the ‘ignorant talk of foolish men’ (and women). We certainly have plenty of those around. Not that I am judging! This may look as though we are ignoring worrying behaviour but it is an exercise of keeping our eyes on Jesus and of letting go. Silent prayer might just be the answer.

We have a beautiful passage about silence at the very end of the Bible. In Revelation 7:17- 8:1 we read, ‘For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour’. We need silence to take in the wonder of God’s love.

We’ve considered quite a number of Bible passages to see how silence can change ordinary life to something extraordinary. We have also seen ways to harness silence to serve us in our journey to love. Silence is not just absence of noise. It is its own entity and we’ve explored that entity. We’ve seen how important silence was in Jesus life; how he served us from the grace he received through silence. Silence can stir us and calm us. It can send us on a search or it can offer respite. It gives us room to listen to our own lives and bodies. My friend, Sr Catherine, RSM, told me the body never lies. We can dis-

cover more about ourselves by gifting ourselves times of silence. It seems silence can almost be our best friend! I encourage you to be still and know God.

Questions for Reflection

Please remember it is not necessary to answer all of the questions. Mainly choose one or two that speak to you and perhaps you would like to share.

1. Sr. Arlie Mirren begins her article by saying that silence and stillness are gifts we can bring to our prayers. She mentions in Psalm 46: where God says “Be still and know that I am God”. How do you relate to those words?
2. She also mentions that with our silence and stillness our ability to listen is enhanced even more. Do you find that to be true with you?
3. As we read and study the psalms, we see that through them our human emotions are there. While we can relate to that, there are time when we are to remain silent but also times we need to know when to speak. How do you balance that?
4. Sr. Arlie speaks of the relationship between Jesus and his Father in the words of the Hymn “*Dear Lord and father of Mankind*”, where it says “where Jesus knelt with thee, the silence of eternity, interpreted by love”. Can we envision that type of bond?
5. As Jesus prays in the Garden after his arrest, Sr. Arlie Mirren speaks of where Jesus prays to the point where he sweats blood and yet, knows there is no other way. His total accepting of the way knowing there is no other choice, can we in our hearts and minds how this seems?
6. Sr. Arlie speaks of “Centering Prayer” which she wrote about earlier. Having recently joined a group over the past several months, do you belong to one? Perhaps if not, you might want to consider this step. “Open Heart, Open Mind” by Fr. Thomas Keating is an excellent source to begin with.
7. “Lectio Divina” by Basil Pennington is also another step she suggests us to continue to use or to start to use again.
8. Sr. Arlie Mirren tells us “At my age, I am trying to loosen my hold on “stuff”. While a lot of the stuff can be lovely, sometimes, it can be hard to let go of past hurts and pains. “Time in silence gradually opens my ears and to gradually let go so I can let God’s love through” It takes time but wait and see.
9. In closing Sr. Arlie tells us “It seems silence can almost be our best friend. I encourage you to be still and know God!” Let us begin again.

Sr. LaVerne Peter