



# THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

LITURGY BYTES *by Michele Hall*



Have you ever visited a place where you noticed how quiet the area was as you approached it? There are many places in our country that come to mind where the noise of conversation stops and a zone of quiet takes over. I am sure you are thinking of places where you have noticed that behavior. For me, the first one that came to mind was the 9/11 Memorial in lower Manhattan. I am sure we could fill up this page with many other examples. However, for our reflection today I would like to discuss silence opportunities at Mass.

Pope Francis in 2013 said very simply at a morning Mass, "It would do us good to have a little silence." Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that silence should not be just a pause in the liturgy or an absence of speech but actually an integral part of the liturgy---"a silence with content---the only appropriate response to a God of mystery who summons us to silence." Silence is really good for us because it increases our self-awareness, has a cleansing effect, heightens other senses, and helps us to unite with others.

Here is what the General Instructions from the Roman Missal prescribe about silence at Mass:

- Before the opening procession – should be a call to silence before the Processional song is begun.
- Every time the priest says: "Let us pray" – take 30 seconds for silence.
- Following each Scripture reading – allow God's Word to sink in – take 30 seconds before beginning the next reading or the Psalm or Gospel Acclamation.
- After the homily – take 60 to 90 seconds so the people can absorb what was said.
- After each Intercession in the General Intercessions – take 5 to 10 seconds to pause so the people can reflect on that petition.
- After Communion – Two or three minutes should be given to reflect on this profound moment in the liturgy.

It is so helpful to try to use the above moments to help us reflect and recognize these special moments of God's presence.

***Be still and know that I am God.***  
(Psalm 46:10)