



‘If I was alone in the woods without a cellphone and no one else was around, I would start breaking down’ — it’s time to get back to God

Recently I had a conversation with a gentleman from a suburb of New York City on the topic of silence.

He laughed at the idea of being silent and said, “I honestly don’t think I could last for more than 10 seconds with no noise. If I was alone in the woods, without my cellphone or anyone else around, I think I would probably start breaking down.”

The sad thing is that he was serious.

New York City is filled with a cacophony of sounds: horns blowing, people shouting, music blaring, trucks and subways screeching. And with the colorful visuals of Times Square in Manhattan and the intense advertising just about everywhere, it can all cause a sensory overload.

Personally I find refuge in the many spacious and beautiful Catholic churches scattered all over town. The doors of these churches are thick, keeping out toxic noise — and the visuals of stained glass windows and sacred architecture easily lift the soul up to God.

A few months ago, I sat next to a Jewish psychotherapist on my train ride back north up to Westchester County. She described how many of her clients struggle with past hurts

and tremendous anxiety. She said she often uses hypnosis to transport them to a more peaceful and happy place, whether it be a quiet lake or a scenic mountain range, or even something like a Barbara Streisand concert (she is a big fan).

Most people today are agitated, restless, anxious — and they're looking for an inner calm that only God can give them. This therapist admitted she did feel the limitations of staying on the mere human level — and she was fascinated by my effort to describe the power of prayer and of connecting with God as a faithful friend, father, and giver of deep inner peace.

Make space in your busy life to hear God's whisper. As St. Mother Teresa has reminded us, "In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence."

God whispers. He does not shout. He will not remove your earbuds, shut off your car radio, or push you into the quiet confines of a Catholic church.

He respects your freedom — but He also knows the needs of your soul.

Silence is like fresh oxygen for the soul, giving grace and God an opportunity to refresh and nourish you. Some say, "It's better to burn out than rust out."

My observation is that those who make time for silence and prayer tend to be the most productive and peaceful people in the world. Make space in your busy life to hear God's whisper.