



One of the most transformative books I read last year was Cardinal Sarah's **The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise**. As a peace-and-quiet-loving mom of five, silence is something I crave always. It can never be too quiet. I love the stillness of the early morning before anyone else is awake, and the sudden calm after everyone's gone off to work and school. I don't put music on when I'm alone in the house, or have earbuds in when I'm out for a walk, and when I'm driving on my own, the radio is usually off. To be honest, I wasn't sure if Cardinal Sarah could teach me to appreciate silence any more than I already did.

But the first thing I learned is that **God's silence is not simply an absence of noise. In fact, silence is not an absence at all, but the "manifestation of a presence, the most intense presence of all presences."**

But "it is not enough to stop the movement of one's lips and the movement of one's thoughts. That is only being quiet." So if silence is more than the absence of the noise made by our talking and our thinking, more than simply the act of being quiet, how do we enter into what Cardinal Sarah calls "God's abode, the temple of silence", especially when we live in a world, a culture, and a home of constant noise? Thankfully, he gives us eight ways to quiet our hearts and seek the interior silence our soul craves (here are the first four):

Consecration

"During the Mass and the Eucharist, the consecration and the elevation... we can glimpse the silence of heaven."

As a parent, a lot of things are going through my mind during the consecration, and not all of them are still and quiet. Why are the teenagers poking each other? Why is the eight-year-old backwards? What are my intentions for the week, what am I praying for, what do I need healing from? Sometimes I put a lot of pressure on myself to get this instant just right, to have the children quiet and all facing the altar, to say just the right thing in my head at the moment of consecration. In my effort to make the most of the moment, I don't often make space for silence. **And yet it is here, if I can finally still myself enough, that I can get a glimpse of the silence of heaven.**

Adoration

“Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament... [allows] us to enter a little into God’s silence.”

I usually approach my Holy Hour well prepared. I've got everything I need to fill my time: my prayer book for opening and closing prayers (3 minutes), my rosary (22 minutes), the days' Gospel (5 minutes), one or two books (20 minutes), my journal (another 10 minutes). The hour, full of praying and reading and writing, is done before I even know it. “I don't take anything with me when I do a Holy Hour,” a friend once said to me simply, and I stared at her in disbelief. “Then what do you DO?!” She shrugged, though I suspect her answer would be not far from that of the old parishioner when asked the same question by St. John Vianney: “Nothing. I just look at Him and He looks at me.” To this man, and to my friend, **I suspect, gazing upon the Lord in silence, and receiving His gaze in return, is the pinnacle and priority of Adoration.** I set my books aside when I approach the Blessed Sacrament now. **Silence first.**

Humility

“Humble adoration opens us up to an attitude of abandonment and trust.”

In silence, says Cardinal Sarah, in prayer that listens more than it speaks, “man acknowledges his nothingness, and he literally has nothing to say”. When we offer God the gift of our silence in prayer, or even in a moment of struggle, a moment of temptation, we overcome the “arrogant attitude” that we are in control and place ourselves joyfully at

His disposal. **Through the humility that our silence expresses, we can allow God to truly take hold of us.**

Openness

“...with our heart, understanding, and will wide open, let us allow God to introduce us to his silence and diligently learn to love and to live in this same silence.”

A friend of mine often humbly refers to her “me-do attitude”. This is the attitude of a child who, insisting on doing something on his or her own, cries out “Me do!” and refuses to be helped, taught, or guided. We can bring this same “me-do attitude” to our lives when we approach prayer like a morning meeting with God, of which we are the chair, complete with an agenda of expectations, schedules, and pre-defined resolutions. Making room for silence at the beginning of the day opens us up to the possibility of being taught, moved, stilled, and spoken to. **“Silence is above all the positive attitude of someone who prepares to welcome God by listening.”**