

The Gift of Silence, Solitude and “The Cell”

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Recently retired, I drop off my granddaughter at my parish's Catholic school. Morning mass in my own parish church conflicts with the school start time, so, finding another church with a mass schedule that fits the time constraints, I drive across town and join the obvious “regulars” who know each other and are a small community within this parish. Because the newly built church is so large, daily mass is held in a central space created in the original church—now a combination of offices, a side chapel dedicated to Eucharistic adoration, a small kitchen and this central space with chairs and altar. It is very simple and intimate... like a small series of “cells.” To my heart, very Carmelite.

Comfortable, cozy... a family around the table to welcome Him in wonder and awe, to ponder the mystery of the Three in One present in a mystical union of Love, to accept the immersion of that Love into our own self and soul. The cell of the host, the cell of the soul, the cell of the mystical body of Christ. From the table, the priest places the hosts into the pax of each parishioner sent forth to shut-ins... the cell expanding, opening wide to the world hungry for Love poured into and through us to the waiting world outside.

A final blessing and song. I join several attendees, silent as shadows, who disappear into the side chapel where the tabernacle awaits, where the candle glows, where the noise of affectionate farewells interspersed with small talk begins to fade, where the door shuts. Silence. Stillness. The veil of time and space disappears and the silence yields what He wills it to be: His breath breathing through mine; His music sung by my soul; His quiet filling my darkness with Light; His gaze penetrating mine; His “All” encompassing my nothingness until this nothing becomes All. I have longed for daily mass and this time alone with Him throughout my entire professional career.

For 43 years of my teaching career, the 30 minute car ride to school and back home in the late afternoon

was a cell of silence, a profound awareness that, even if I could not attend morning mass, my heart was a tabernacle of desire where the Beloved manifested Himself to me... a tabernacle alive with His presence at every moment of the day ahead...

There is a silence of wonder and awe and praise in this beyond the telling!

And now, with the luxury of retirement, I attend morning mass and am gifted with the grace of time to return to Him in adoration and “being in Presence”... Such a gift! He gives me Himself in Eucharist; He gives me the gift of time and the cell of this small, silent side chapel to be with Him...and then He sends me forth to fulfill His plans for this day...And I am aware that now, even as “then” when I saw my cell as a 30 minute period of travel back and forth, the cell of my soul is always Him, entirely Him, forever Him, timelessly and eternally Him.

Our “cell” is not a place or a time. It is our soul within us and at every moment we are in His presence to love, adore, worship, listen, receive and serve.✠

“In repentance
and rest is your
salvation, in
quietness and trust
is your strength.”
(Isaiah 30:15)
