

Ascension Day – World Communications Day Homily Notes

There are moments in life which call for silence.
So, for example, each year on remembrance day
we are united in a minute of silence to recollect all those
who have lost their lives in warfare.
And at football matches silence is often the
way in which the crowd will unite in paying tribute to the death of a great player.

There are the moments when we are lost for words.
At the birth of a child,
before the beauty of a great work of art
or the majesty of a golden sunset over the ocean
silence is often the only appropriate response.

Today on Ascension Day we can imagine the wonder of the disciples
as they witness the glory of Christ's Ascension.
The scene painted in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles
depicts them, open-mouthed, staring heavenward
Two men appear to them and say
Why are you standing here looking into the sky?

Silence need not mean emptiness,
silence can be the contemplation of glory.

Ascension Day is also Communications Day
and in his annual message
Pope Benedict has written about the need to rediscover silence
as an integral part of communication.
He observes that
*'It is often in silence
that we observe the most authentic communications
taking place between people who are in love:
gestures, facial expressions and body language are signs by which
they reveal themselves to each other.'*

He reminds us that God also speaks without words.
The great Christian mysteries are first of all what God does even before God speaks.
At Christmas when God gives us his only beloved Son
the great carols celebrate silence.
Silent Night, Holy Night

and we also sing
How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given

And it is in silence that Holy Saturday is transformed into Easter Resurrection.

Pope Benedict writes;
*'As the Cross demonstrates, God also speaks by his silence.
God's silence prolongs his earlier words.
In these moments of darkness, he speaks through the mystery of silence'*

If God speaks to us even in silence,
we in turn discover in silence the possibility of speaking with God
and about God.

In the Gospel Jesus says to us
~~Go~~ out to the whole world:
proclaim the Good News to all creation

If we are to proclaim the word we need silence
because learning to communicate is learning to listen
and contemplate as well as speak.

As the Ascension of Jesus does not mean he is absent,
he ascends in order to fill the whole of creation with his presence
So silence need not be a void of emptiness
but when approached with faith
silence is the fullness of God's word.

We have a message to communicate:
Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and has ascended to the right hand of the
Father
so that all people will also rise and share in God's life.

In order to communicate that message
we have first of all to listen in silence to God's word
so that we may hear his word.

We are then called to listen carefully to others,
so that we may know what is in their hearts.

When we have done both of those things
then we may confidently speak God's word
as Christ commands us.

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