

A SINNER, SILENCE, AND A SAINT

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HE SILENCE of the sinner and the silence of the saint both sound the same. The ear cannot detect any difference between the silence of a person making his way up the aisle of a dimly lighted church to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament and the silence of a thief making his way up a dimly lighted alley to break into a jewelry store. Both move in silence, and silence is a mystery to the ear.

THE MODERN, SILENCE, AND MYSTERY

Silence is a mystery to the modern. The modern is immersed in the things of the senses, so silence is foreign to all the things he knows and loves. The modern wants to see and touch, to taste and smell the heavy crust, and hear the empty rattle of the world. Only then does he feel secure in his world of the senses. Silence, however, does not bow down and do reverence to him or his world. Like every mystery beyond reach of the senses, silence is a subtle mockery of the modern way of life. It remains quiet, unperturbed, aloof from all the things in which the senses so delight. In its own quiet way it evades modern scientific analysis. Silence cannot be weighed or measured. The chemist will never find it in a test tube, for it is neither component nor catalyst. The technician might try to record it, amplify it a thousand times, but he would record nothing, amplify nothing, and when the recording was played back, there would be nothing but a most embarrassing silence. Science can tell us nothing about the buoyant silence of the cloister, nor the depressing silence of the dungeon. To the modern they both seem the same. To the modern all silence means the same emptiness, loneliness, desolation. They see in it only a sign of inactivity and call it an enemy of progress. They feel that for a man to impose a rule of silence upon himself, or to seek out moments of silence is a sign of lethargy and ignorance.

Yet the modern world trips over a treasure when it fails to find deeper meaning in silence. The "Dumb Ox of Aquino" was so called because of his silence, yet this silent young man became St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor . . . the Universal Doctor of the Church. His silence was not a sign of lethargy nor ignorance. There are times

when a mother knows that silence is not a sign of inactivity. A mother very often says, "I'd better go see what the children are doing, they have been quiet too long." Even the modern should know that silence is not a sign of inactivity. The world does not bump around its course like a wagon on a cobblestone road. Down through all ages past, even to modern times, the whole of the universe carries out its tremendous task in the silence of the night. Yet Christians, more than anyone else, should know that silence is not a sign of inactivity. The greatest activity the world has ever known took place in silence. "While all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word, O Lord, came down from heaven from Thy royal throne."

ST. THOMAS, SILENCE, AND MEANING

The language of silence is eloquent, but it speaks to the mind and not to the ear. The world does not understand its language, or thrill to its eloquence, but silence has always been a joy to the Christian. Christianity has always been interested in silence, from the silence of the first Christmas night; through the silent years Jesus and Mary spent together in Nazareth; through the silent years of Christianity entombed in the catacombs; through the ages that brought silence out of the bowels of the earth and gave it cloistered gardens in which to delight; up to the modern day, when, in the din of busy towns and cities, silence has cathedral walls wherein to rest. Christians have always been careful to guard silence as most precious. They have always kept it as an adornment of their beloved shrines; their churches, convents, monasteries, and their own hearts.

Many Christian writers have treated of silence. Religious orders and congregations include silence among the disciplines to be observed. Some religious have a particular obligation to observe strict silence. Some have found in silence a general virtue, calling it the custodian of many virtues. Others have given it the place of a virtue as a species under modesty. Yet St. Thomas, the Master of Theologians only speaks of silence a few times in all his works, and then, only in treating of some other subject. Concerning the unity of form in baptism, he mentions silence as an interruption of speech. He lists silence among the regular observances to which a religious, if consecrated Bishop, is not obliged. It would be impossible, then, to construct a tract on religious silence from the writings of St. Thomas. Yet if the definition of material silence is seen in the light of St. Thomas'

¹ Officium from the Mass of Sunday within the Octave of Christmas.

teaching on privation, it will be possible to discover many meanings of silence. The "negation of sound" as it is found in the universe can have diverse meanings when viewed under particular circumstances, for the negation of a form in a subject has diverse meanings in reference to diverse subjects. Material silence is a negation of the form "sound" in a subject. Silence can only be understood by the mind in the light of the reference the silence has to different subjects. In St. Thomas' teaching on privation there is a key for unlocking the mystery of silence. If the lead he gives be followed silence will begin to speak. This will not be an exclusive discussion of religious silence, but a broader discussion touching many types of silence. Such a discussion and understanding of silence can effect a deeper appreciation for the silence Christians should know, love, and practice.

THE KEY, SILENCE, AND CREATION

God spoke and the world was made. Nothing existed before the "fiat" of God gave things their being. The silence that preceded creation was nothing. It had no meaning. But when God gave existence to the world, He gave meaning to silence. Though silence was, before creation, a simple negation; since the creation of a material world, silence takes on meaning. Silence, as it is in the world, is not a simple negation, but rather a privation, that is, "the lack of a form in some subject." Strictly speaking, privation implies an imperfection for it is the lack of a form in some subject which ought to have that form. The singer who is deprived of the use of his voice suffers a privation in the strictest sense, since, as a singer, it is proper to him to have the use of his voice. On the other hand, not every privation is to be understood so strictly. St. Thomas says, "Privation may be taken many ways."² It may be called a privation if something lacks that which, though not proper to itself, is proper to another. St. Thomas gives the example of the stone that is called dead. The stone lacks life, but it is not proper to the stone to live, so the "dead" stone really suffers no imperfection. With regard to silence, the example may be given of the guardian angel operating at man's side. His operation produces no sound. He never squeaks and, therefore, never has to be oiled. Yet the lack of sound in the operation of the angel is not because of some imperfection in him, but rather because of his more perfect spiritual nature.

There is another way in which privation may be taken. It stands between the privation of a due form and the privation of a form that

² *Summa*, St. Thomas I, 33, a. 4, ad 2.

does not belong to the subject. This third way is defined by St. Thomas as "the lack of a form in a subject which is in potency to that form."³ This definition fits that silence which is the lack of human speech. Man is in potency to speak when he is not actually speaking. When man is silent he lacks the form "speech" to which he remains in potency. It is proper to man to speak in the sense that no other creature speaks but man, however, it is not proper that man should always be speaking. There are times when a man should speak, and there are times when he should not. To remain silent when one should speak is to be lacking in a due and proper operation and is an imperfection. There are times, also, when a man should not speak, and to remain silent is a proper and due perfection. It is here that silence takes on a moral character. The proper use of silence can be reduced to particular virtues. Thus the man who keeps silent in order that another may speak is practicing the virtue of charity, while the man who keeps silent in order to restrain anger is practicing the virtue of temperance. The improper use of silence, on the other hand comes under the vices. The man who keeps silence in order that, by his silence, another might be unjustly punished, is doing an injustice. The lack of sound, or material silence, is not the virtue or the vice. In itself, the lack of sound has no meaning, but only when it is seen as a lack of human speech ordered by the reason to some proper end does it take on moral significance.

A consideration of silence as a privation, then, shows that there can be many meanings to the moments of silence of which we may be either participators or witnesses. In choosing to be witnesses of material silence as it is found in the lives of others, we will attempt to discover what the "lack of sound" means to them. With this in mind we go on next to consider ;

DRAMA, SILENCE, AND A PAUSE

Silence is full of meaning. Many times a farmer has gathered in his cattle because the still air, the motionless leaves, the silence of the countryside told him of an approaching storm. The silence that precedes a storm is different from the silence that follows a storm. The first is an ominous silence, the second a refreshing silence. Both have meaning in relation to the storm. Just as the silence of nature speaks, so too the silence of man. Two actors might be equally qualified in their poise and appearance, in the quality of voice and enunciation, but the one who knows how to utilize the dramatic pause will be by

³ *Ibid.* I, 66, a. 2.

far the better actor. He can transform a drab recitation of the other into a stirring interpretation. The silence of a dramatic pause is a "significant" silence. Though the lack of speech has no meaning in itself, the silence draws its significance from the words or actions that precede and follow. The mind can discover the secrets that the silence clothes in soundlessness.

In analysis of the dramatic pause it will be found that the silence indicates a hidden change, an interior change either in the speaker, or one which the speaker wishes to effect in his audience. In a general way the actor utilizes the dramatic pause to interpret some change in the character he is portraying, whether it be a change of emotion, attitude, intention, or decision. The silence allows the time for the inner change to take place. Then he picks up the new thought or new tempo. The more the actor understands and measures the hidden changes, the more natural his timing and the more perfect his art of verisimilitude. The comedian uses the pause in speech to great advantage. He carries a story to a certain point, pauses to allow the hearer to draw a logical conclusion, then flips the hearer's mind over his shoulder and carries it away with his own unexpected or incongruous conclusion. The lecturer too uses the pause. His pause is usually to effect a change in the audience. The lecturer may suspend a thought in order to arouse the wonderment of the audience, to emphasize a particular word or phrase. He will pause before attacking a new line of thought, in order to allow his audience to adjust to the change. He might pause merely to relax his audience after a difficult or moving part of his lecture.

The importance here is that the silence does have purpose and meaning. It is not an empty silence. Something is happening. There is activity of the mind, the heart, or the emotions. The silence takes on specific meaning in relation to the activity which takes place within the man. Thus the silence one would hold in the presence of a king differs from the silence that surrounds human tragedy. The ear would attend the court of a king in vain, for silence in itself does not speak of majesty. Yet the mind can understand a majestic silence, not so much because of the silence, but because it knows the awe at the majesty of a king. The ear could not tell the heart to weep at a funeral, for silence, in itself, does not reveal sorrow. Yet the mind can understand a sorrowful silence, not because of the silence, but because of the sorrow at the death of a friend. It is a rather significant fact that the words we hear used to describe silence are, usually, something like this; an eerie silence, a terrifying silence, an ominous silence, an embarrassing silence, an empty silence, a desolate silence,

while we seldom hear of a joyful silence, a recollected silence, a contemplative silence, a holy silence. It is indicative of an age that has found horror and emptiness in the world, but does not understand the beauty of God.

THE SINNER, SILENCE, AND THE SAINT

The silence of the sinner and the silence of the saint both sound the same but they are not. The silence of the cloister can tell nothing of the peace that dwells in the soul of the saint. The silence itself is too fragile to carry the grossness of a word that might explain. But the soul of a saint can tell much about the silence in which it lives and loves and finds its happiness. The silence of a dungeon can tell nothing of the terror and despair of a thousand and one sinful exploits. The silence itself is too simple to spell out the chaos of a soul without God. But the soul of the sinner can tell of the empty, hollow silence in which he dies a thousand deaths and finally finds despair. The mind can discover the meaning silence has for the sinner and for the saint by investigating the activity of their souls.

SIN, SILENCE, AND TERROR

Every man must live with himself, but few live a truly interior life. "As soon as a man ceases to be outwardly occupied, to talk with his fellow men, as soon as he is alone, even in the noisy streets of a great city, he begins to carry on a conversation with himself. If he is young, he often thinks of the future; if he is old he thinks of the past. . . . If a man is fundamentally egotistical, his intimate conversation with himself is inspired by sensuality or pride."⁴ Man lives an inner life, but it is not necessarily an interior life. For the man without Faith his inner life, his silent conversation with himself, is a living death.

The greatest terror for a man without faith is the silence that would leave him alone with his own thoughts. Man fears the silence of his soul for the truth of what every man is can make itself known in the silence of the heart. A proud man can put a false bottom in his heart and fill the rest with self aggrandizement and illusion. The sensuous man can build a facade for his heart and paste it with the ornaments of pleasure. But when the proud man ceases to speak of himself and looks at himself in silence he knows the emptiness in the depth of his heart. And when party favors of pleasure begin to fade, when the walls of the facade have crumbled and the silent rubble

⁴ Three Ages of Interior Life, Garrigou-Lagrange, Chap. II, Vol. I, pg. 40.

remains, the sensuous man knows the gnawing abyss in the silence of his heart where the soul of his true self lies dead. Man can try to escape from the silence into the exterior world of the senses. He can throw himself into feverish activity to gainsay the silence. He can plunge back into the sea of pleasure to drown the silence. But the silence he has met in the depth of his heart he can never escape. Man cannot outrun the emptiness in the opened tomb of his own soul. He cannot drown the terror of having seen his own grave.

DEATH, SILENCE, AND DESPAIR

Silence cannot be destroyed. No matter what man thinks of it, it is something with which he has to deal. It always stands before him. It always holds fort within him. The forces that can bring death surround man, he must face them every hour of the day. The potentiality to die rests silently within man awaiting the forces of death to break through the flimsy barrier of the flesh. Man the composite of body and soul must die. The body and soul will inevitably be separated and a deathly silence shall conquer. For the man without faith that silence is despair.

The man who walks into the face of death must deal with that silence. The deathly silence that precedes a battle falls upon the shocked figures of men long before the shells. "Everyone looks at everyone else as though each man were trying to gather in the nearness of his fellows for strength against a loneliness that might come too soon."⁵ But there is none who can reach him. He can gather no strength against the silent potency to die. No one can give him strength to keep body and soul together. He can die. The silence around him tells him of forces being gathered against him. The silence within him tells him how weak he really is, how little he is master of his life. He knows it might be only a stray fragment, but all the days and hours of training, all his strength and all his skill have no way of countering it. Life hangs on a thin thread of contingent happenings which are completely out of his control. He knows he is weak. In his weakness he knows his loneliness. He might try to reach back into the past, for the strength of a word, a smile, a touch, but the past is always just out of reach. He might paper the walls of his heart with hope against the future, but the silent walls still hold him a prisoner within himself. He knows he is lonely. And in his loneliness he knows his weakness. Man must die.

If such a man knows nothing of the God that brought him into

⁵Beach Red, Peter Bowan, pg. 6, Random House.

existence and holds him in existence, if he knows nothing of his own immortal soul, nothing of God's redemptive plan and promise of eternal life; if he has known only and seeks only after the pleasure of his lower appetites, that silence is terror. If such a man has not a love for God, and faith in His Goodness and hope in His Mercy that silence is despair, for his soul is already dead. There is something terrible about the blinding flashes and thundering blasts of battle, but something more terrible is that some of the twisted bodies that are carried from the front lines are casualties of silence, more than of war. Some of the popular interpreters of combat life who lived to march in the victory parades, yet who display their twisted thoughts in their books of skepticism, determinism, fatalism and despair are not so much casualties of combat as they are casualties of an interior war that was waged in the silence before battle.

LOVE, SILENCE, AND LONELINESS

Everyone has heard a youngster plead for its mother to read a bed time story. There is an urgency in the cry that betrays more than a childish desire to hear a childish story. The child is not so much interested in the story as he is the nearness of a voice he loves. He wants to shut his eyes, rest, and still have the assurance of a loved one close to him. When he is tired and sleepy, when he is at his weakest, he doesn't want to be left alone. The child outgrows the crying stage, he outgrows the need for mother, he outgrows his desire for childish stories, but the man never outgrows his need for another. The mind of man is always searching for something that can satisfy his desire for happiness. The heart is always reaching to embrace what the mind sees as good. Yet if man does not lift his mind beyond the things of the world, and set his heart on the God Who stands over the world, he will never know where happiness is to be found. There will always be a loneliness in life that nothing in the world can fill. Man can find many good things in the world, but when he has embraced them, he finds that they cannot yield up the full measure by which the mind measures goodness, nor can they completely satisfy the requirements which the will prescribes for happiness. No good in the world can ultimately satisfy the will of man which seeks concrete good under the measure of the universal concept of goodness in his mind. Man finds loneliness in the midst of plenty, for the heart that seeks rest in final perfection cannot be satisfied with a world full of means.

Man needs another who can fulfill his desires to know and love, and satisfy his longing to be known and loved in return. He cannot

find the perfect other in the world, not even in human love. Certainly young lovers cannot rest in the assurance that they are mutually known and loved. That is why they must speak almost continuously while they are together. They must exchange their thoughts and feed their growing love with knowledge of the beloved. They turn to gifts and acts to express their willingness to give themselves to and accept the beloved. Then love begins to simplify. New words are not necessary. Love begins to retrace and deepen its path by repeating the words, the gifts, the affections. When love has matured, when every word of the loquacious young love has been seasoned by the fidelity of time, when the lover has given all it can to the beloved, there remains the silent love that cannot be expressed. The silent exchange of a glance or the touch of a hand reaches deep into the heart to acknowledge and accept, to give and to will a love that cannot be put into words. No words could express, nor affections exchange the simplest, purest moment of human love, when it stands in silence. The lover asks only the silent presence of the beloved.

Yet in that silence there is a certain sadness, and a terrible loneliness, for even the simplest, purest moment of human love cannot fill the silence of the human soul. Despite all the poetry and songs of human love, when a father and mother stand at the bedside of a dying child they learn a hard lesson. There is a limit to human love. The father might try to understand the mother's heart, but he cannot. He can't possibly understand all the secret, hidden, intimately personal, exclusively motherly exchanges of love that are buried in the sorrowing heart of the mother. He cannot truly understand the mother's love. Though he would like to hold her hidden heart in his hands and comfort it, still he has no way of reaching it and no way of comforting it, if he could. Nor can the mother truly understand the father's sorrow, the father's heart, the manly love. His has been a protecting love, a providing love. He has manfully spent his energies in providing and protecting his wife and his child, but this moment leaves him a helpless figure. He cannot protect the mother's heart from the overwhelming sorrow, he can no longer provide for the child. He might place a strong hand on the mother's shoulder, because his will can still command the movements and strength of his own hands, but his love for her is helpless. When the mother and father face each other in silence they know deep in their hearts that there is a limit to human love beyond which the soul cannot reach. Every lover must finally realize that there is a dungeon in the depth of the heart where man is confined to himself, where he must live with himself, and no human person can gain entrance.

The perfect union of lover and beloved cannot be found in human love. The final perfect union is always just out of reach, always just beyond the touch of the hand, resting just behind the smile, lingering somewhere in the quiet depth of the eyes, always silent in the untouchable deep of the heart, always pleading for a more perfect union, even sighing for a more perfect lover. There remains in every human heart an eminently personal place that cannot be violated by human love. There remains a silent, cavernous capacity to be known and loved in a way in which no human lover can know and love. So even at the heights of human love there is a silence. The silence tells of human loneliness. It tells that the mind and heart of man must look beyond the world to find the perfection of knowledge and of love, to find the "other" who can perfectly know and endlessly love the "I".

ST. THOMAS, SILENCE AND THE MIND

Looking at silence through the activity in the soul of the proud and sensuous, we have found that for them silence is frightening for it takes away their world of activity. Seeing the silence of eternity through the activity of the soul without faith, we have seen that silence means emptiness and despair. Glancing at human love, we have found that the silence at human love's purest moment means loneliness to the human lover. It remains then to see what silence means to the saint. As far as is possible, we will try to look at silence in reference to the activity in the soul of the saint.

Though St. Thomas never wrote a tract on silence, the modern can learn a fuller meaning of silence from this Doctor of Truth. He can learn something of what silence meant to Saint Thomas by considering the works of St. Thomas. The words St. Thomas wrote, the words he spoke in his lectures and sermons represent hours of silence, for his words and his works were the fruit of contemplation. St. Thomas did not confect the truth he wrote and spoke, he did not dream up the Summa. He was not a Master of Sacred Theology until, in the silence of his cell, he had first become subject to sacred truth. It is one of the mistakes of the age to try to plan, or produce, or create, or be master in the exterior world, without first becoming the humble, silent subserviant of truth. St. Thomas studied before he spoke. His silence is little known, but, his works tell of a love for the silent activity of a mind devoted to truth, subjected to truth, disciplined in truth, conformed to truth. The silence that smiled through his cell was not an empty silence, a lonely silence, an inactive silence. The silence was not the silence of the idler, the dreamer, the illusion-

ary. The silence was not filled with the creative activity of the artist or poet, nor the vain activity of the novelty seeker, nor the capricious activity of the curious. It was the activity of man's highest faculty, the intellect, contemplating the highest truth, God. It was the activity of a soul that seeks to know God in truth, for it desired to love and serve the true God. In that silence there was the peaceful, joyful activity of a mind alive with Faith, nourished by the word of God, sustained by its own subjection, and made strong in truth. The truths which he wrote and spoke were the result of an intimate, personal, studied search for God, and the fruit of contemplation of those truths when possessed. Silence was not a terror to St. Thomas, nor was silence an emptiness. He filled the silent hours of his life with the contemplation of truth. He was not lonely in that silence, for the Truth was God.

ST. THOMAS, SILENCE AND THE EUCHARIST

If it is true that St. Thomas found profound spiritual activity and strength in the silence of his cell, how much more was his soul filled in the silent presence of the Eucharist. The silence of the Eucharist speaks to the soul that approaches the Altar with Faith, Hope, Love. The idols of pagan altars are made in the form of the living, but have no life. They appear to the senses as living, but are dead. They "have mouths, but speak not; they have eyes, but see not; they have ears, but hear not."⁶ The God of our altars appears to the senses as bread and wine, but the living Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity is substantially present. In His silent presence, He knows and loves. His knowledge reaches into and knows the depths of the soul as it can be known by no human lover. He hears the prayers that well up out of the silence. The Eucharist speaks of a love that can sound the depths of the human soul, that can fill the yearning of the mind to know perfect truth and of the will to possess perfect happiness.

In the Office St. Thomas composed for the feast of Corpus Christi he shows the way to find the Truth and Goodness of the Eucharist. In the "Tantum Ergo" used at Benediction St. Thomas urges

"Let us therefore, prostrate, adore so great a sacrament and let the Old Law give way to the new rite: let faith supplement the defect of the senses."⁷

⁶ Psalm 113, v. 13 and 14.

⁷ Literal translation. Hymns of Dominican Missal and Breviary, Byrnes' Herder.

Only in the light of Faith does the silent presence of the Eucharist speak. But to the soul with Faith the silence of the Eucharist is eloquent.

THE EUCHARIST, SILENCE, AND ELOQUENCE

God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, the Word made flesh to institute a new era of love, to reestablish a friendship lost, to bring the fulness of love, to unite once more helpless man to Almighty God. Like the young human lover Christ spoke to man, but because He was Divine, He told of the things of God. He revealed intimate secrets of love hidden in the Godhead. Like a human lover He brought gifts, but because He was Divine, His gifts were not limited as those of a human lover. When He had compassion on the blind, and the sick and the lame He could do more than offer support with the touch of His hand. His touch had the power to reach inside and heal. The call of His voice had the power to penetrate the bodies of the dead, to give hearing to dead ears and life and strength to be obedient. "Lazareth, come forth."⁸ But more, His gifts were for the souls of men, to forgive sin, and raise the soul to supernatural life. His words were a pledge of Divine Love. His actions were proof of Divine Love. "Greater love than this no one hath, than one lay down his life for his friends." The final proof.⁹

But the age of love did not end with His death, it only matured. It was no longer necessary to speak like the young lover. He had revealed Himself and the truths of the Godhead. He had founded a Church to guard and teach these truths. He had instituted the sacraments to continue His gifts of grace. It was no longer necessary for Him to prove His love. Henceforth there would be no need for man to see His hands outstretched to believe in His compassion. No need for man to see His feet walking about the earth doing good to believe in His mercy. No need for man to feel the touch of His hand to be raised from the death of sin. Man had His Church, His sacraments, His priests. There was no need to hear the call of His voice to believe in His love. He could now stand hidden and silent from the eyes and ears of man. His love had reached its simplest purest moment. It was the seventh day of the new love. It was time for Divine Love to express itself in Eucharistic silence.

St. Thomas had no secret except the silence he used so well. In the silence of his room he came to love the truths of God. In the silent

⁸ John 11, 43.

⁹ John 15, 13.

presence of the Eucharist, St. Thomas found Truth itself, the Word made Flesh, living and loving. In the silence of the Eucharist he found the great truths of Christianity, the Incarnation, the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, the Crucifixion, and Eternal Glory, all speaking out to Him. And in answer He wrote the beautiful Hymn of praise "Verbum supernum prodiens." In a single verse of unparalleled content and beauty he gives us the fruit of the silent activity of his great contemplative soul.

"Being born, He gave Himself to us as companion,
Eating, He gave Himself as our nourishment
Dying, He gave Himself as our ransom
Reigning, He gives Himself as our reward."¹⁰

St. Thomas has bestowed great treasures of knowledge about God and the things of God to the Church through his theological works. Yet each word bespeaks his love for the full, active silence of contemplation. St. Thomas wrote only a few poetic hymns all of which concern the Eucharist. They speak of his love for the joyful, happy, and holy silence of Eucharistic adoration.

SUMMARY, SILENCE AND SANCTITY

There is a silence as empty and hollow as a well without a bottom; a silence as shallow as a mind without truth; a silence as lonely as a heart in despair; a silence as dead as a soul without grace. It is the silence of the sinner. He forsores it in death, and finds it in life, no matter what he touches, what he knows, what he loves. In the silence that leaves him alone with himself he finds it in his own soul. He hates silence. It is his first taste of the desolation of hell.

There is another silence as full as the contemplation of truth; a silence as active as a mind that accepts the fullness of Wisdom according to the word of God; a silence alive with Faith, Hope and Love. It is the silence of the saint. It is the silence of a recollected soul. Such a person finds the truth of God in everything he touches and knows and loves. In the silence that leaves him alone in the world he finds the true living and loving God in his own soul. He loves silence. It is his first taste of heaven.

Christians know the treasure of silence. They know that silence alone will not change the soul, but they also know that the activity of the soul can change the silence from emptiness to fullness. The moments of silence in every life are the minimum requirement for a

¹⁰ Literal translation. Hymns of Dominican Missal and Breviary, Byrnes' Herder.

recollected soul. The soul needs silence. The soul needs those precious moments when it can draw away from exterior activity and reclaim itself. It needs silence so that, apart from the world, it can draw spiritual strength, the knowledge to direct its acts, the will to perform them, the grace to accomplish God's will in all things. For those who wish to seek God, silence is a garden enclosed where the soul can pour itself out to the Beloved, and the Beloved pour forth His grace on the soul. The moments of silence that are found in the life of every man can reflect the fruitful hours of silence which the rules of the cloister prescribe in letter, and urge in spirit with the words "Sanctissime silentii lex," the most holy law of silence. It was that silence, so different from the empty silence of the world, that guarded the path, and helped, in its quiet way, to bring the "Dumb Ox of Aquino" to the lecture platform, a Master, and Master Thomas to his knees before the Blessed Sacrament, a Saint.