

Transformed by Christ
in
Silence and Solitude



Christmas Message 2022 - Menzingen

Dear Sisters,

Greetings from Menzingen. I would like to share a short reflection and invite us to unite in prayer as we anticipate the coming of Jesus this Christmas.

As junior sisters we always had our annual refresher course and retreat during the season of Advent which ended shortly before Christmas. Since many of us were engaged in parish ministry it often meant a big 'letting go' to our involvement in the parish and all the preparations that pre-empted Mid-night Mass and the excitement of community celebrations. My preference, as a young sister, would have been to be involved in parish work and to be among the people rather than being in Solitude and Silence. However, the wisdom of our Formators at the time was to help us to put Christ at the centre of our lives and to be led to our inner space where Jesus could speak to our hearts, minds and souls.

"Therefore, I am now going to lure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her." Hosea 2:14

The journey of life has taught me that real transformation and conversion can only happen when we submit ourselves to God, in Silence to listen, and in Solitude to let God speak within us so that we can be led into a deep and loving relationship with Him. And truly this is no quick-fix superficial work.

Silence and Solitude are often desired values but in reality not easily attainable. They are values that are counter-cultural in our world, beautiful, yet oversaturated in social media and characterized by a mass of electronic gadgets and an infinite array of Google **not Gospel** content constantly streaming into our minds and consciousness. We are ever engaged in busyness, and in the hustle and bustle of diverse events.

In our modern world of technological speed, *sitting still and praying* is one of the hardest things to do.

Yet to lose our capacity for stillness is to lose some part of our humanity. To lose our capacity for solitude is to lose touch with God and eventually with one another.¹

Being open to be transformed by Christ in Silence and Solitude can only happen when we take time apart from our daily routine and seek to find Christ in an intentional way. It demands an uncluttering of our lives, minds hearts and souls (including our surroundings, work and living spaces).

As we enter this liturgical season again in preparation for the Birth of Jesus I invite all of us to re-enter our necessary inner world of Silence and Solitude. Decisively taking time apart for Jesus as we await His Coming among us. Decisively making space for Him in the 'inn' of our hearts.

We **read** from the Gospel of St Luke 2:4ff

*Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, **because there was no place for them in the inn.***

We **meditate** on the reality of this experience when the Saviour of the World comes to birth in a stable... alone with the exception of His parents and a few shepherds. He was born during a *Silent night* and in Solitude.

We read the scripture again being attentive to *what words or phrases in the text that attracts our attention. Notice any questions that arise in your heart or what is new for you.*

We reflect how silence leads us to stillness, even if it takes time, to remain in the presence of Someone we love and who loves us even

¹ Christmas and the Gift of Solitude. December 17, 2014. Tasyo

more. We listen and become aware to the Other whose presence we seek and desire.

We ask ourselves where do we/I make space in the 'inn' of our/my life for Jesus to be born?

We become more deeply aware that solitude isn't just the absence of people, self-distraction or being alone but it is a desired space that truly enables us to be present to ourselves and to enter the sacred place that God created within each of us for Himself. It is a moving away from the over crowdedness of daily living to experience inner fullness that enables us to return to our core and to remind ourselves of who we really are before God and in whose image and likeness we are made. *Genesis 1:27*

As we read the Gospel for the third time, we *notice our emotional response* to the text, especially to the words or phrases we first encountered. We ask: how do we/I feel? (gratitude, joy, doubt, surprise, anger, fear, disappointment, delight, confusion, or any other feeling?)

Finally, we/I **contemplate** *what God wants to say to me/us personally*. It may be an invitation to be or do something (What's God's invitation to you?); or a challenge (How is God transforming you?); or it may be a confirmation of a direction to take (Where is God nudging you to go?).

Let us pray during this Christmas for the gift of Silence and Solitude that will allow space for Christ to transform our hearts, minds and emotions.

And after this takes place we can happily return to the parish and enjoy what still has to be done!

Sr. Bernadette

Sr. Bernadette Duffy
On behalf of CLT

We wish you ALL a blessed,
transformative and happy Christmas

