

Readings for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Extraordinary Form

1 Corinthians 10: 6-13

Brethren, let us not desire evil things, as they did. And do not become idolaters, as some of them did, as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.” Let us not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell within a single day. Let us not test Christ as some of them did, and suffered death by serpents. Do not grumble as some of them did, and suffered death by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall. No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it.

Luke 19: 41-47

At that time, when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If this day you only knew what makes for peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days are coming upon you when your enemies will raise a palisade against you; they will encircle you and hem you in on all sides. They will smash you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another within you because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.” Then Jesus entered the temple area and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things, saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.’” And every day, he was teaching in the temple area.

The Noise of the Marketplace and the Silence of Prayer
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – 1 Cor 10: 6-13 / Lk 19: 41-47
Ave Maria Catholic Church, July 20, 2024 – Fr. David M. Vidal

Let us imagine the temple's marketplace in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. People were selling and buying lambs or pigeons for religious sacrifices. At the same time, at the moneychangers' tables, people were exchanging Roman coins or foreign currencies for coins acceptable for paying the temple tax.

Let us hear the noise of the temple's marketplace in Jerusalem: the sounds of the caged and tied animals, the shouts of sellers trying to call the attention of the people walking in the area, and the protests of buyers who found themselves robbed by the high prices of the animals for the sacrifice and the high commission of the money exchangers.

That was the noise of the temple's marketplace. It was an unpleasant sound, a disturbing sound. It was the sound of thieves in a place meant to be sacred and holy. It was the sound of people stealing God's glory and investing in their own interests.

That is the noise of the world.

The noise of gossip, the noise of lies, the noise of cursing, the noise of impurity, the noise of avarice, the noise of murdering, and many other worldly noises. However, that noise is so loud and dominant that many people believe it is impossible to live without it!

As a result, the life of worldly people becomes just noisy, like the noisy marketplace of the temple in Jerusalem that Jesus visited.

Jesus came to the temple and began to drive out those who were selling (according to the gospel of St. Luke) and those who were selling and buying (according to the gospel of St. Mark), and He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And He taught them a lesson: "*It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer.'*"

Jesus came to the temple. This action has two meanings.

First, Jesus went to the material temple of Jerusalem. The material temple is the sacred building, the house of God, consecrated to God alone as a place dedicated to prayer, adoration, and the celebration of the sacrifice. In God's temple, the faithful lift their voices to God in supplication: "*Give ear to the prayer which your servant offers towards this place. And attend the supplication of your servant . . . and when you hear, forgive,*" (1 Kings 8:28-30).

Second, Jesus's action did not stop at the purification of the physical place. Jesus wants to purify our spiritual souls, which are meant to be temples of God and houses of prayer. The

soul in state of grace is a spiritual temple. In the dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jesus reminds us that everyone should worship God in the temple of his own soul: “*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks, to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*” (Jn 4:23-24). Jesus' zeal and love for the Father's house do not stop at a temple of stone. Jesus wants to purify our souls.

How does Jesus purify our noisy souls? Jesus purifies our souls with the power of prayer in silence.

In his book, *The Power of Silence*, Cardinal Sarah reminds us that God speaks in silence. It is not the silence of an absence, but the silence of a presence. God's presence is neither in the strong and violent wind that rends mountains and crushes rocks, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the *light silent sound—the whispering sound*. (1 Kings 19: 11-12). That was the experience of the prophet Elijah after he defended the honor of God's name on Mount Carmel before four hundred false prophets. After doing that, in a cave on Horeb, Elijah discovered God's presence in the *light silent sound*.

But to hear the whispering sound of God's voice, we must make the effort to remain in silence. Cardinal Sarah explains: “*The silence of everyday life is an indispensable condition for living with others. Without the capacity for silence, man is incapable of hearing, loving, and understanding the people around him. Charity is born of silence. It proceeds from a silent heart that is able to hear, to listen, and to welcome. Silence is a condition for otherness and a necessity if one is to understand himself. Without silence, there is neither rest nor serenity nor interior life. Silence is friendship and love, interior harmony and peace. Silence and peace have one and the same heartbeat.*” (Sarah, *The Power of Silence*, 32).

However, many people are afraid of the power of silence. For many, it is more comfortable to hear the noise of the world. This noise does not demand much. It is like morphine. Living in the noise is easier. In the noise, we stop thinking and asking questions. But if we do not think and ask questions, how are we going to act? Like morphine, noise paralyzes and prevents us from performing so many beautiful actions that we are supposed to carry out.

What should we do? We should close our ears to dangerous sounds. However, as good as that action would be, it is not enough. Cardinal Sarah also tells us that we must free ourselves of the tyranny of images and enjoy the silence of the eyes. “*The silence of the eyes consists of being able to close one's eyes in order to contemplate God who is in us*” (Sarah, *The Power of Silence*, 44). We should also close our other senses to the craving for things that are immoral and harmful to our relationship with God. In a few words, we should silence the noise that prevents us from having a holy conversation with God in the interior of our hearts.

We should not be afraid of the power of silence in prayer. This power does not destroy us but builds us up. It is the power of a relationship of friendship with God, who loves us and teaches us in the interior. It is true that in that silence, we will discover the ugliness of some of our dispositions and actions that need to be reformed. However, in that very same moment of silence in the presence of God, we will find the strength to reform whatever needs to be changed.

Jesus had the power to purify the physical temple of Jerusalem by turning the moneychangers' tables and expelling sellers and buyers. He also has the power to purify our souls and make them truly houses of prayer and temples of God. Let us strive to open ourselves to His action in us in the Silence of our Prayer.