

# The Eloquence of Silence

In days when society seems to be canonizing the extrovert and giving its applause to the man of glib tongue and open mouth pouring out a torrent of words, when sounds of great volume seem to make the only appeal to our youth who crave for a vibration of their senses, I am pleased to write in praise of silence once considered as precious as gold.



Some years ago I had the courage to use the theme of the 'Still Waters of Silence' for an address to the graduates of our woman's college dedicated to Our Lady, The Woman Wrapped in silence. An editorial in the local papers on the following day admired the speech as a message of great validity for the noisy world of the 50's. How the decibel reading of sound pollution has risen since then shall be obvious to anyone who has what used to be called the gift of hearing!

Some of the apparent signs of the restlessness of our age and the frantic attempts to escape from facing the reality of self and the pursuit of the Hound of Heaven are these:

a) Verbiage: For some, life is interpreted

as an uninterrupted flow of words to be finally silenced by death. On a tombstone in a New England cemetery there is carved this epitaph:

Beneath this stone, a lump of clay/Lies Isabella Young/Who on the 24th of May/Began to hold her tongue.

How typical, poor Isabella! She passed through life without a chance to think, to pray, to know herself. St. Paul described what had to be her shallowness of life as 'sounding brass — tinkling cymbal'.

b) Noise — Absorption in the confusion of others: Since the tongue is a muscle and can grow tired, there are those who grow weary of their own speech and plunge themselves into the protective noise of others — the idle conversation of the gossip, the inane conversation of the cocktail party — the noise of radio and TV and traffic. With ears stunned by meaningless sounds and words, they escape from discovering that their own hearts are rooted in a silence not of death but of life eternal.

c) Neurosis: This is the common disease of the 70's. It sets in upon all who are unable to be sufficiently distracted by 'a' and 'b' — are forced to look at their own emptiness and desperately enter upon a course of self-redemption. This all leads to becoming ec-

centric, i.e., out of our Center which is God. To numb the inevitable pain of frustration we have an increase of various forms of temporary annihilation — alcoholism and drug addiction.

Whether we like it or not, we have been created as a hunger for happiness, a desert thirst for truth, a restless, insatiable gnawing for the beautiful. The Creator so fashioned us to set us on a pilgrimage — wanderers on the face of the earth until we have reached the Promised Land. The language, and the only one which keeps us in contact with the Way, the Truth, and the Life, is the language of silence. This is the only line of communication between God and Man. Good prayers may begin with words but must end by wordlessness and listening. We pray by declaring our silence and tending to it wordlessly. It was in the silence of wordlessness that the Word of God broke in on our history, as the passage from Wisdom reminds us in the Christmas liturgy:

"When a profound stillness compassed everything, your all-powerful Word, O Lord, bounded from heaven's regal throne."

May the Word of God begin to enter our personal history — as we learn the worth of silence.

By Father John J. Steger

Guest Columnist

# The Story of St. Jude

Father Steger is Pastor of St. Jude the Apostle Church, Gates

St. Jude one of Christ's 12 Apostles, has been designated Patron of seemingly impossible causes and hopeless cases. Many traditions have developed in Christianity about this great saint.



He was a near relative to Jesus, a son of Mary of Cleophas and as a child probably a companion of the Christ child. He was one of five Judases identified with the life of Christ and because of the possible mistaken identity with the infamous Apostle, Judas Iscariot, for many centuries in history and Christian devotion he was referred to solely by his surname, Thaddeus.

One of the traditions that has grown up around Jude happened before the death of Christ when the King of Edessa, afflicted with leprosy, requested Christ to come and cure him. Christ not able to go, the King dispatched an artist who again was unable to capture the likeness of the sacred countenance of Jesus.

According to the story, Christ impressed his countenance on a napkin similar to the

impression on Veronica's veil and gave it to Jude to take to the King.

The Apostle cured not only King Agaro but preached Christ to his people and pledged that he would return.

After the resurrection of Christ, with the mandate of an Apostle, St. Jude returned to the district of Mesopotamia where he spent most of his life making converts to Christianity.

Sometime between 70 and 80 A. D. he wrote his only recorded work in the New Testament — "The Letter of Jude" — which is a very beautifully inspired work on what it means to be a Christian. Shortly after the completion of this work, he suffered martyrdom by being clubbed to death.

St. Jude the Apostle Church at 4100 Lyell Road, Gates, is the first parish dedicated to St. Jude with a resident pastor in the Diocese of Rochester, although there have been a mission chapel at Fairhaven and a chapel at the State hospital in Rochester named for this saint.

The towns of Gates, Greece, Spencerport and Ogden are served by the new parish and the people, by ballot, selected the name of St. Jude for the parish. With the resources of a cow barn, the land of a farm and the inspiration of their Patron, the people have converted this primitive plot into a thriving parish.

This parish is a living witness to the power of its Patron. In three short years the barn was converted into a Church, the farmhouse obtained for a rectory, a catechetical center and parish hall built, a four-hundred car black-top drive and parking area completed, improved grounds area for recreation and children, and finally a Georgia white marble outdoor shrine and planter for public veneration is the culmination of humble love and work for God's Church under the inspiration and intercession of St. Jude.

All of this may not be a hopeless or impossible case, but it was done as a labor of love by the people who themselves designated their Patron, St. Jude. This is a true witness to the spiritual power of this great Saint in our own day. We hope that this will become a center of prayer to spread love and devotion to St. Jude.

Editorial

# A False View of Liberty Helps Crime Destroy Us.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation released last week statistics showing that the nation-wide volume of major crimes rose 11 percent in 1970.

But lest the shocked think that these frightening armed holdups and street muggings, rape and vandalism, are found only in big far-away cities, partial returns indicate that lawbreaking in some towns of this diocese went up as much as 25 to 60 percent over the previous year. Rochester's reported crimes rose 26 percent but in the three largest suburban parts of Monroe County — Brighton, Irondequoit and Greece — the jump was over 50 percent in each town. The FBI says the 15 percent national rise of crime in rural areas is

twice as grievous as the increase in the largest cities.

The most discouraging figures are for robbery and violent assaults against individuals. The victim risk rate is increasing: the possibility of any day becoming the victim of a serious crime, that could hurt your body or your pocketbook is nearly three times as terrifying now as a decade ago.

Beneath the lust to hurt or steal there lies in most law-breakers the belief that an individual has the right to do whatever he pleases. This doctrine of personal liberty laughs at traditions of "proper" conduct, scorns the claims of authority to set disciplines for the general welfare and tramples

on the feelings and rights of anyone else. It's a jungle freedom.

Pope Paul in a recent address made several significant points about the use of individual rights. He said:

"If everyone wants to do as he pleases on the pretext of liberty, then we will easily come to the decadence of civil society. . . . It is true that liberty is a personal right, but it cannot fail to respect the rights of others. It must be directed toward good and this direction is called sense of responsibility, it is called duty. . . . Conscience must be one's guide, but conscience itself must be guided by the science of things both human and divine."