

The possibilities of silence

I just came in from a great holiday afternoon at Frontier Field. The weather was excellent, as was the game. The only thing that would have made the day more enjoyable would have been a Red Wing victory. We lost 2-1.

There was a special experience during the game. At precisely 3 p.m., Dan Mason, the general manager of the Red Wings, invited us to a moment of silence to honor those who sacrificed their lives in defense of our country. My understanding is that the same invitation was extended at 3 p.m. at all professional ball games being played in our nation today.

I was much impressed by the way the fans responded to Dan's invitation. It is difficult to imagine nearly 7,000 people remaining more peacefully silent than the crowd did today. The only sounds I could detect were wisps of laughter and a little chatter from children too young to understand what was going on. It seemed that those pleasant sounds only highlighted the thoughtfulness and reverence of the moment.

That particular experience of silence impressed me because it seemed a welcome and appropriate way to remember and honor our war dead. It also renewed in me a sense that for many people today the experience of silence is unfamiliar and, sometimes, unwelcomed.

If that is true, some cultural factors prob-

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

ably influence the reality. Music fills elevators and entertains us while we wait for a response to our telephone calls. Pagers and cell phones keep us connected with others even when we may wish to enjoy a moment apart. And just think of how technology allows us to carry music with us at all times.

I have nothing against any of those things. Indeed, a pager aside, they are all a part of my experience. My interest and questions center on whether or not the sum total of these things robs us of the experience of silence and the benefits we can derive from that. I mean such things as a disposition to prayer, an attentiveness to the deep streams of our own life or the quiet voice of a loved one. What about the time and inner space that silence can provide for us to reflect on the relative importance of the many things that we do?

We all know that life today can be complex, demanding and rushed. I know that

for myself. Even if I did not, I would be aware of it because so many of you tell me that it is true of your lives. There certainly are no easy ways to cope with all of that. But one avenue is available to all of us without extraordinary effort. That is to experience and appreciate what we might think of as the daily, ordinary moments of life that lend themselves to silence.

Let me suggest a few possibilities:

- those moments between hearing the alarm and getting out of bed in the morning,
- the time between going to bed and falling asleep at night,
- the drive to work,
- exercise time,
- moments in church before and after the service and especially during the service when ritual invites us to listen and/or to take deep within us what we hear,
- a brief moment when the family gathers at table or just before all leave.

Some or all of these ideas may be unattractive or impossible for you. Some may be helpful. My hope is that you will think about the possibilities for silence and find some ordinary ways to enjoy it yourself—especially if you feel driven or overworked or overwhelmed by life's demands.

If you come up with some other ways to enjoy the possibilities of silence, I'd love to hear about them.

Peace to all.



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