



Silence

the Gate
of Holiness

Silence —
the Gate of Holiness

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- The Silence of Mary
- Spiritual Directory
- Silence according to
Blessed Elisabeth of the Trinity



Militia Immaculatae

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For the practice of skilful silence

Silence is necessary and even indispensable. Indeed, when silence is lacking, God's graces dry up. We then cease to be instruments in the Immaculate's hands, and we can only spoil her deeds, even if we accomplish the most sublime actions.

Silence does not mean saying nothing, but speaking only to the extent that the Immaculate wishes it; as much as, no more than. To speak only as much as necessary, we should continuously watch over ourselves, in order to say only what is indispensable for the conduct of daily business.

If we do not keep the prescribed silence, we will not correspond to the graces of God, and if we lack a grace, the whole series of subsequent graces will be lost to us, whereas we could have received them if we had kept up our meditation. What a responsibility to God!... For by taking advantage of these graces, we could have become saints and led others to them, setting a good example; but if we fail to do so, others gain nothing, and we lose. Because

example is a driving force. A doctor in Nagasaki told me that when he saw the behaviour of Christians, he converted. He did not need any discussion or demonstration for this, their example weighed more than these.

But how do you get used to silence? Above all, pray, for only the Immaculate can accomplish all this in us. Then, it would be good to offer this practice of silence to the Immaculate at the beginning and end of each of our actions of the day, if only by the invocation: "Mary". In the event of failure, one should never be saddened by it, for that smacks of pride; on the contrary, with great love and joy in the soul, get up immediately, and move on! Repair this fall with a perfect act of charity.

Then, unceasingly, unceasingly, make every effort! We must always set foot on the first rung, as St. Theresa of the Child Jesus says, until we finally move the Lord God, who will come, take us in his arms and lead us to the top.

In this way we will radiate the light of the Immaculate and spread its goodness around us. But then, it is not ourselves, but the Immaculate, our little mother, who will do all this in us. We are a little like the moon, which at night lights up so brightly that we could read a book in its light. But it illuminates only by the light of the sun, and not by its own, because it is without brightness of its own accord. The same is true for us, who are without brightness and do not give light. However, we will radiate, when we draw this light from the Immaculate, our Mother.

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
Mugenzai no Sono, 17th of April 1934



*Mary kept all these words,
pondering them in her heart.
(Luke 2:19, 51)*

The Silence of Mary

It has been said that silence is the language of angels, who communicate with one another without the sound of words. Perhaps it is even better said that silence is the language of

meditative souls that continually engage in converse with God. God treats us, His creatures, with great reverence.

Therefore while we speak He is silent. When we are still, He speaks and raises us to those supernatural thoughts and affections and heavenly colloquies which are granted *Tu autem dominator virtutis, cum tranquillitate judicas, et cum magna reverentia disponis nos* (Wisdom 12:18) only in solitude and silence.

Now Mary who had clothed with human nature the Substantial Word of God (*Verbum Patris*) assuredly did not care to divert herself with the talk of men, but loved to be silent, that she might converse in her heart with that Word, who when He no longer tarried in her womb remained in her soul. O how the voice of man must have grated on Mary's ear, accustomed as she was to the soft ineffable whisperings of the Word to her soul! How often she must have said within herself, "I will hearken to what the Lord God will say in me, for He will speak of peace!"

The perfection of silence is clearly seen in our Blessed Lady. Let us now begin to meditate upon her holy silence.

Is not our Blessed Mother the most captivating model of the interior life? Contemplate her in the Gospel. She was the great Silent Woman. She spoke but rarely and each time said only what was indispensable. Only once do we see her expressing herself at greater length, in her canticle of thanksgiving, the *Magnificat*; and this she sang to praise God and not to converse with men. On the other hand, she reflected on the life of her Son. Twice Saint Luke tells us that she kept in her heart and meditated on all that she learned about Him. Contemplate her; admire



her, imitate her. You will become a man of silence, a strong and zealous apostle.

Frequently, draw near to Mary. She is like a most secluded sanctuary where you feel penetrated by the spirit of recollection as soon as you enter. For in her presence you live no longer amid the agitation of earth but in the peace of heaven.

You will see that this Marian recollection will prepare you for the apostolate. It was by spending ten days in the retreat of the Cenacle close to Mary that the Apostles prepared themselves to receive the Holy Ghost, in order that they might then go forth to conquer the world.

When you leave this sanctuary to devote yourself to exterior activity, all sorts of human and selfish preoccupations will strive to ensnare you again in order to ruin your apostolate. But you will look at your Mother and she will look at you, and in her glance you will read: "For whom are you acting? How would Christ act in your place?" This will suffice to redirect your activity towards God.

You leave your Marian sanctuary in order to act. This will happen for some time. But if you become intimately united with Mary, you will never go away entirely. Even when speaking to

men, you will remain close to her! You will have a feeling resembling that of a supernatural priest when he preaches from the altar! He thinks of those to whom he is preaching and at the same time he remains under the influence of Him who dwells in the tabernacle at his side.

After engaging in activity, return more completely to her. Sometimes you will be sad, perhaps discouraged. But tell her all that you have done and all that you have experienced, and peace and confidence will return immediately to your soul.

Oh! How efficacious will be your activity on behalf of souls, and how sanctifying for your won soul, once you remain habitually under the influence of her whose militant you are!

The Gospel mentions seven occasions only on which the Virgin Mother spoke. We are told but little of her early years prior to the angel's embassy, and not one word spoken by her during all those years is recorded.

Then Joseph is prey to a cruel anguish on her account and is minded to put her away, but **Mary is silent.**

At Bethlehem are heard the voices of the angels and of the shepherds, but **Mary does not speak.**

During the flight into Egypt she is full of solicitude for her Child and intent on saving Him from His enemies, but **she is silent.**

For the space of three years her Divine Son bears His good tidings from town to town and from village to village, while Mary communes with **her own heart** and **keeps silent.**

Jesus speaks from His cross on Calvary, **Mary is silent.**

The apostles receive the gift of tongues in the guest-chamber, **Mary is silent.**

These seven times of silence are full of eloquence to him who lovingly ponders on their mystery, and they may be arranged in the following order:

1) Silence of peace, which conceals from the world Mary's early years, until she receives Gabriel's message.

2) Silence of mystery, namely, the secrecy which Mary observed concerning her divine conception, even with St. Joseph.

3) Silence of meditation, in which Mary gave birth to her Son and afterwards offered Him in the Temple to God for all mankind.

4) Silence of humility during the time of exile in Egypt and afterwards in the humble home of Nazareth, where Mary lived as if were buried in concealment with her divine Son until the commencement of His Public Ministry.

5) Silence of constancy in which Mary remained during the three years of her Son's preaching.

6) Heroic silence, with which she gazed on Jesus as He went on His way to Calvary, and again while she stood beneath the cross, and finally at His burial.

7) **Blissful silence**, in which she received with delight, but without boasting of them before men, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost the Comforter on the day of Pentecost.

Mary was silent – interiorly silent so she could listen to God. Let us try to imitate her interior silence so we, too, may listen to God. May Our Lady remind us where we truly belong: absorbed in God in childlike contemplative prayer.





The Gates of Silence

Spiritual Directory

Preliminary remark

I turn solely to you, the happy soul that the Lord brings to the desert to speak to your heart; to you alone, who have chosen Him as the One, or rather, whom He has chosen forever as the host of praise.

Do you want to burn in front of His glorious face like a candle made of the purest wax?

Do you want to be enlightened by His brilliance, kindled with His love like the cherubs and the seraphim, and to reflect His light and His love?

Voluntarily forget about the world, the universe and yourself.

If you are not sure about losing your life in Him and for Him, do not go any further. The content of this book will not enlighten you.

And if the abyss tempts you, beg the Lord to cover you with solitude and to throw you in silence where He lives, which He fills and where He reveals. For your part, make every effort to live this way.

If you manage to practise rigorous obedience and perfect love for your neighbour, you will avoid the four things that are the greatest obstacles to inner silence, preventing you from contemplation: inner noise, inner discussions, inner obsessions, and concern for yourself.

When you achieve this, you will pass through the **GOLDEN GATES OF SILENCE!**

I. Hush up your internal noise

God gave the life of grace to your soul when it was silent: at baptism, in an unhindered silence. He filled it only with Himself. It was later when the world entered it gradually that it was overwhelmed by the noise, which deafened the quiet voice of God. Since then, the hustle and bustle has intensified. Return to the silence of the baptism, my brother!

Noise has three sources: memories, curiosity and fears. Hammer them down.

1. Drown out the noise of memories

Do not evoke or enliven any of your bad memories. The evil you regretted was forgiven. The generosity of present love rewards past mistakes. Forget about their specific circumstances. It is enough that you remain before God like a sinner who has experienced His infinite mercy. Evil is "nothingness": why should we remind ourselves of it? Think only about the grace that saved you, about its effect on eternity. God has destroyed everything. He does not keep track of what does not exist. Preserve your heart for Him, a heart that is filially repentant, silenced and tender: this is what regret is all about.

Do not evoke or enliven any secular memories: neither who you were, nor what you did, nor what you cast aside in the world. Give God everything precious you have here, your family or friends. Are they not beloved sons and daughters of God too? Will he forget them because you, who for his love, have renounced their company? All the thoughts and ideas you devote to them are of no use to them and only turn your mind away from God and often disturb your heart, your confidence in Providence, and your faith in the kindness of God. Your imagination should never consciously cross the walls of the enclosure. Only



*Whether or not taking part in
that unnecessary conversation
was a transgression of silence.*

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
30th of August 1932

grace effectively helps those whom we love, and we receive it in proportion to our intimacy with God. Look at Mary in Cana. She does not leave her place. "Do whatever He tells you". (John 2:5). Voluntarily maintained memories of the past are the source of excessive self-esteem, grief or anxiety. Enjoying the pleasure once experienced is sensuality and searching for oneself is like putting dreams and illusions before essential, real and underestimated joy. There is only one source of happiness that counts: God.

It is only through the love on which it was born that temporal success has value. The love of our neighbour that enlivens us is the only cause of our joy. Let your vain memories disappear and be buried: they disperse you, hold you back, grow upon you into what should perish lest it weaken your desire for eternity. Like St. Paul, look not at what is behind you, but at what is before you: Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:13).

Don't keep any material memorabilia concerning specifically things you should no longer dream about: photographs, letters, flowers, "relics" of your past attractions. Do not store anything. It doesn't lead to God. When you look at these things, your old feelings and impressions revive. If you don't look at them, why should you store them? They are only unnecessary burdens. This habit damages the silence of your heart and its freedom.

Why sustain this constant temptation to go backwards? Be happy to loosen or break all your bonds and don't succumb to developing them anew.

Avoid, as far as you can, direct contact with witnesses of your past: visits, letters, refresh the image of a world that can hardly be blurred! To the extent an obedience and a true love of one's



*I resolve to exercise myself in
silence, which is recommended so clearly
and earnestly.*

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
14th of December 1932

neighbour allow it, in the spirit of the monastic tradition, reduce oral or mail communication with the world. Do not maintain relations that have already been broken.

You have nothing to receive from the world, and although you give it so little in return, if anything at all, you do not deprive souls of their basic respect for monastic life.

The slightest spot can be seen on the spotless robe, we are so imperfect! Your memory is a dangerous storage battery: it stores the grains of future distractions. The more your mind is free from human images, the more vividly the light of God's face will shine in you.

Hide your tenderness for your beloved ones in God's heart. Love them in Him. Such love is infinitely deeper and more effective. Desire the love of God for your friends: this is the only true good. Your fidelity to your contemplative vocation will procure it for them; any compromise will make it difficult for God to give in. However, if duty requires it, be endearingly warm-hearted while forgetting about yourself at the same time. In principle, keep your distance from the world. Jesus left His Mother to save us. In fact, by separating Himself from her, he united himself most closely to

her. Remember that it was because life at home in Nazareth was so agreeable, that the farewell was heartbreaking...

2. Restrain your curiosity

Don't inquire after any information just for the pleasure of "knowing". Give up all scientific prospecting that does not aim at God. Nothing is more opposed to the purity of the soul than curiosity. The purpose of our contemplative life and the requirements of our earthly existence determine the scope of knowledge that is necessary for us. Leave the rest to the laity. For us, lonely and silent people, knowing, loving and worshipping God are only necessities in our life. Our pilgrimage is short, our mind is limited, our free time is rare. Throw overboard what is not necessary. You are one of the angels of the Apocalypse whose only task is to sing and fall on their face before God's throne: "Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever." (Revelation 7:12). "You are the brother of Isaiah" the seraphim cried out to one another: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). You will contemplate Him in prayer, not in learned books.

In particular restrain three types of curiosity: concerning "news", the behaviour of others, and finally intellectual curiosity, the most harmful one, because it dresses up as sophisticated appearances and reassures us in our pride.

Be completely indifferent to what is happening in the world: pray for it without looking back (Luke 9:62). If you have a profound spirit of adoration, if you love the transcendence of God, the detailed knowledge of specific human needs will not

give any new impetus to your prayer, nor will it increase the generosity of your sacrifice. The love of God (including the love of your neighbour) is able more than any other power to trace the footsteps of Jesus and the whole world with you. Thinking about the world would have nothing to do with the effectiveness of this action. There are few souls able to comprehend it. If you can understand it, do not inquire in any circumstances about anything that is happening in the world. Anchor in God all the vital forces of your soul; ask for the "news" only because of love: to please someone, if this is appropriate, or to do something good, not to please yourself. Everything that is said about someone close or far away, about their fuss and bother, evokes images, reflections, discussions and internal criticism. In short, this is the noise that God does not endure.



Silence, frequent ejaculatory prayers, an ever more fervent love for the Immaculata nourished by the fulfilment of her will manifested through holy Obedience, especially in things that are contrary to self-love and to nature; mutual understanding, a cheerful serenity, etc.

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
15th of May 1933

If people don't tell you anything about something or someone, don't ask for anything; you're extremely lucky! Do not read daily papers or secular journals, except if you should do so out of your state duties. Don't pay attention to random things. Focus your eyes on the eternity or what is the true reflection of its beauty: nature and the souls at which God looks as in the mirror.

In your love for God and in your zeal for His glory are expressed the first three requests of the "Our Father": it also concerns people. You shall be occupied solely with Him. You are a seraphim (and nothing else) in front of Him. If you need to know the world's events out of duty, do it superficially, without being interested or involved in them. Keep your mind and your heart independent and silent, otherwise your soul will be confused. All you need to know is that God loves people boundlessly, that He has their hearts in His hand and pours out the fruits of His saints' merits on them.

What other people do? It's not important. It is not your vocation to help them. As Blessed in Heaven, look at the world in God, not Him through the world. Be "the sacrifice of glory"; thus the earth will be better and blessed. May you become like a candle of real wax that burns bright and pure alone in front of the Host in the shadow of an empty chapel, where all the hearts of the world converge and where all graces for the whole earth come from!

Do not take up anything or anyone outside your area of responsibility. Be happy not knowing what is going on in the various offices, how they are organized and what their interrelationships are like. Love all your brothers with equal and selfless love. Don't ask about the extraordinary events in the community at all: who



*God will bestow graces in abundance.
But you have to work in silence and
recollection.*

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
Rome, 1912

came, who left, what is the purpose of such an action or undertaking of your superiors. Have an aversion to interfere in the administration of the monastery. Pray for those who have such a duty. Don't think about these things; don't talk about them; don't try to find out why this or that happened. Don't arouse an interest in what you learn unwittingly. Other people have been charged with these functions to enable you to care about God alone, in freedom and silence of spirit.

Others do not tell you anything? Don't they pass anything on? Bless God for it! He spares you a sea of thoughts and the complexity of problems. Love with gratitude those who bear this burden for you. Help them with your serene submissiveness, whereby your state is to be carefree. God has placed you here to be your only concern. That is His will: to be the only bread of your soul. Do not listen to or pay attention to the monastic gossip. You only have to pray for those who are in a difficult situation; encourage them (if the opportunity arises) to love the cross of Christ. Human consolations are of no avail and they also weakens souls. Don't be eager to confide or to accept confessions. Do you think there is someone who understands more than Jesus?

Do you want to keep the transparent mirror of your soul? Don't let it be troubled by unnecessary thoughts about your neighbour. If you are not responsible for the actions of others, do not ask them about their behaviour; do not conjecture about them internally, especially in regard to their faults and guilt. Just pray that all may love and serve God. Depending on the established custom, talk to your supervisor about it directly or indirectly and he will accept or use your information. Do not seek such opportunities and avoid making internal comments about the intent or manner in which your supervisor will receive or use your report. Leave him the concern for the correction of others and leave God to pass judgment on them. Always be wholeheartedly turned toward God alone. All thought, directed at creation, leads you to yourself; in the end, you judge it usually on account of yourself, not on account of God. Even if all other people were not as they should be, keep the peace. Be as you should be. Your silent and calm fidelity will do much more for the progress of your brethren than your agitation and your admonition which is often ineffective. An example of your cheerfulness, your susceptibility to God's radiation through you, will encourage more for goodness than all your talking and a harsh reproach. Your soul must reflect only God. Do not allow creation to look at it as in the mirror, especially when it is twisted or distorted.

Unite with the living and personal God. It's not enough if you enjoy the idea of God; if you feast yourself with ideas "about" God or "in relation" to God. The words that reveal Him, cover Him at the same time. Any scientific curiosity, even a holy one, increases the impenetrability of the "veil" and prevents the soul from meeting the Beloved. Slowly, in inner silence, in the deepest possible depth,

draw Him to you with the violence of yearning. With your eyes fixed on the kindness of God, speak like St. Catherine of Siena: "I want". He wants to. He will come not in names, schemas or evidence; He will come in a fervent light; it will not be picturesque or have contours, but a radiating light. Remove any reading, informational or erudite study from your timetable, unless it is required by the duty of your office or your need to rest.

Are you afraid that you will not "furnish" your mind? But in order to find God, isn't it necessary to destroy all the "furnishings" or throw them away? Are you going to be regarded as an ignoramus? But the Father reveals Himself to humble, little, and simple people. Do not condemn knowledge unconditionally, but realize that in your contemplative vocation it will be of little use for you. Enamour yourself of slow reading; like a child with her



Expect great things. Endeavour with diligence to know the Will of God and refuse God no sacrifice, no effort. In prayer ask the necessary disposition of spirit for yourself and for others. Pray not more, but better; and be confident. God and me. Inner and outer silence.

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
Rome, 1913

mother, with your hands folded down on God's knees, read a good book which speaks about Him ex corde, about Jesus, about the Blessed Virgin or about your soul and capture sentences or words that flourish in your prayers; it will be a moment of encounter!

The Scripture should become your favourite book. Thanks to it you will be enlightened by the Word. It is the unique food. Read it with a humble heart, in the way that you receive Communion, and with the same goal in mind: to find God. Taste in the Scripture; enjoy it line by line in the atmosphere of a prayer. Every word dictated by God is full of Him. Love for Him hidden under the letter. You will taste the ecstasy of this connection with Light, with the Word which God has spoken in time through the words of an eternal response. Here you will gain the knowledge of saints, beside which all else means so little...

3. Don't be afraid

"Fear" is a burden in our mind, heart and soul. It poisons our existence. Whatever you do, whatever is your material or spiritual responsibility, do not involve your soul in it, and do not let it ever be disturbed by anxiety. It is a lack of faith and trust in God. Everything you have to do in the Order is His own work. Do what you can generously, knowing that success depends solely on Him and not on your ability. If you defer from seeking anything for your own glory, you will live in an undisturbed peace, despite having so much to do. The only thing to be afraid of is sin. God's ways are not our ways. Jesus triumphs over defeat. Nothing has changed for twenty centuries. Be zealous and increase your abilities: this is God's will. Be convinced that everything happens in Him alone. If He does not want your success, accept it with all



Do not lose heart in the face of difficulties; confide in her, listen in silence and in peace. The glory of God, the salvation and the sanctification of souls.

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
January 1920

its humiliating and unpleasant consequences. Then you will be free. It is only important to do what God wants, not to succeed. It is very soothing to think that the Father holds the whole world and the hearts of all people in His hand. Everything comes from His will; nothing happens unless He does not want it to happen. Why should you worry about some idle fears? Only put your abilities into practice at the right time. Do not allow yourself to think about it in the moments that belong to God, such as prayer, reading, the great silence from the Compline to the Prime. Otherwise, the cheerfulness of your soul will be over. Enjoy the wonderful peace of Jesus in His task that covers the world and the entire human race. He enlightens with a few words. He saves through the immobilized and tacit cross. All human prudence will not undermine His words: "When I will be exalted above the earth, I will draw everyone to myself. (John 12:32). The Apostles, great preachers and saints never sacrificed their conversation with God for the sake of apostolic zeal. They entrusted everything to His Providence and have never doubted Him. Earthly achievements of real contem-

platives are remarkable, just as the anxiety of any external activity is fruitless. The pure love of God is the filter. It will remove from your soul not only what opposes it, but also what does not revive it. It objects to any noise that could drown out or change His voice: "When the deep silence was all over, and the night was running out, Your omnipotent Word, my Lord, descended from the royal capital"¹. God came when everything on Earth fell asleep.

II. Dismiss the internal discussions

Observe the train of your thought during one day; you will be struck by the amazing frequency and vividness of your internal discussions with imaginary interlocutors, e.g., those around you. What is the usual source of this?

Our dissatisfaction with superiors who do not love, value or understand us; who are harsh, unjust, or too tight towards us or others. Dissatisfaction with our not very understanding, stubborn, unceremonious, unbalanced, or insulting fellow-brothers...

We have a tribunal in our mind where we are a prosecutor, a chairman, a judge and a juror at the same time; rarely a lawyer, unless in our own case. We present the injustice, weigh arguments, defend the cause, justify ourselves and condemn an absentee. Maybe we work out plans for revenge or vindictive ruses. All of this is a waste of time and strength of which everything, except love of God, should be excluded. In fact, these are the excesses of

¹ Dum medium silentium tenerent omnia, et nox in suo cursu medium iter haberet, omnipotens sermo tuus, Domine, de caelis a regalibus sedibus venit. Antiphon for Magnificat and Benedictus on the previous Sunday in the octave of Christmas. Cf. The Book of Wisdom 18:14–15.

ego, hasty or brash judgments, commotions of passion which cause loss of inner peace, the diminution of respect for our superiors and our brothers, and the regrettable strengthening of the respect we have for ourselves. It is a serious mistake and an undoubted loss.

When someone treats you badly, it doesn't really hurt you, believe me. This is undoubtedly unpleasant. You should want to be unknown and despised. Christ remained silent when He experienced insults and was an object of ridicule. Take all ill-treatment with a gentle and silent heart. Man is only a tool. It is the loving and strong hand of God that guides him, trying to break your pride and bend your neck. Avoid conscious grumbling, even for a second, about what has been done wrong to you. You will not benefit in any way from such a shady tribunal.

Jesus was silent in front of the Jerusalem court. When you experience a storm of indignation, repeat calmly and gently: "Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost". Immerse yourself in the love, glory, and joy of the Divine Persons; Deny every consideration for yourself. Do not allow anything to disturb the radiant and unchanging happiness of the Holy Trinity. Human opinion is meaningless and does not give you anything: you are as



*Listen to the voice of God in
recollection, particularly during
meditation.*

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
August 1918

God sees you. Isn't it an indescribable joy that He rejoices in what is the most beautiful and purest in you?

My brother, may you understand and experience being known only to God! Be happy that you radiate Christ, but don't worry when the radiation is still too small. Aren't you tired enough of talking with people, that you still evoke them in your imagination to blame them? Alone with God Himself! "God knows everything, can do everything and loves me". If only you knew how good it is to have a head free of all creation, to allow only the image of Jesus Christ and Mary, the purest created reflectors of the Invisible! Take care of Them without the noise of words. Words are of a little use: just look, ponder, contemplate. You see the world in Them; all men are for Them. Are the members not the glory of the head? Do not lose sight of the divine face of the Head of the Mystical Body.

This is your role as a contemplative. Our internal discussions are often only a continuation of every day's disputes. Believe me: never argue with anyone, because it does not serve anything. Everyone is confident of their rightful reasons and is less concerned about being convinced than about winning the verbal battle. Next we part in discontent, confirmed in our positions, and the quarrel continues inside us.

Silence or peace are out of the question. If you don't have to, don't try to convince anyone. If you want to stay calm, turn the card around as soon as the dispute starts. Agree to be knocked down by the first blow and humbly ask God to allow His truth to triumph over you and others; then step aside: Your soul is not a market, but a temple. It is not important for you to be right, but to radiate God's love. The truth of your life will reflect onto the truth

of your doctrine. Look at Jesus during His trial: He remained silent, accepting the unjust judgment; now He is the light that "enlightens every man when he is born". (J 1:9).

III. Combat your internal obsessions

You will not overcome these accumulated thoughts or images once and for all, these which stubbornly and intrusively overlap your attention and persecute you constantly. When they are calmly confronted with the truths of faith, their fragility is striking and their value humbled because of the apparent importance they ascribe to themselves. They should not play any role in our behaviour, or at least not such an important one. Meanwhile, they are in first place and want to take over the helm. What form do they take in our enclosed life?

To consider oneself as less loved, hated, persecuted, incomprehensible; to be jealous or rebellious against someone's real or imagined superiority that casts a shadow over us in spiritual, aesthetic, intellectual, or moral matters; to worry about loved ones, about their or our future, torture oneself and to be indignant about the imperfections of others; to strive hard to have an influence on those who are not subject to our power or authority.



Recollection with surrender to God's Will.

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
September 1918

The temperament dominated by imagination and emotionality, a certain inborn tendency to abuse power or towards pride, insurmountable (or poorly fought) egoism — all of this contributes to the creation of obsessions.

A certain Carthusian offers the following effective treatment. First case: an obsession has no real ground (the most frequent instance). This obsession is a chimera born by the exuberance of our imagination, our hypersensitivity, an excessive concentration on ourselves or too little contempt for ourselves. This monk believes that the most appropriate course of action in such a case would be to correct the very ability of judgment (considered wrong), because it makes us unable to see things as they are in reality. So is it possible to straighten it up? In any case, he writes, leave time for reflection. Before you start belabouring, make your nerves and your exuberant imagination calm down. Keep your distance: have a few days of patience. Then, thanks to this distance and silence, you will see how all these things get back into proportion. When you are disturbed, avoid discussions, decisions, or actions. Strong emotion blows away reason; passion leads judgment astray; ego makes you unjust.

Be humble, at least enough to subject your judgment to the control of someone else who does not benefit from being involved in what absorbs you, especially if he is a priest: he has the grace of state to discern the matter.

A soul which is endowed with some clarity of mind concludes the above mentioned Carthusian would be able to recognize it, and submit to the decision of the director (even if he had an average judgment), and would thus be freed from many scruples, from many ridiculous thoughts which often torment other souls. Remain



*Obey God's Will each moment
in humility, recollection, serenity,
and grateful love.*

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modest, open, submissive: these are very effective measures against false ideas, the insistence of which can at the same time make the life of a loner unhappy and lose its dignity.

That is the perfect advice.

The second case is when an obsession has real basis. Such situations happen. Who amongst us is sometimes not truly ill, tired, incomprehensible, persecuted? There are many such examples in the life of saints. Providence cuts, grooves, polishes and forges a soul using its surroundings. The persecution that comes from good people is also one of these experiences.

An obsessive, tyrannical idea may turn out to be justified and right; but the meaning it has in life is excessive. It is not true that we can no longer live happily, love God in peace, sanctify ourselves in joy. Our defects, passions, guilt, the injustice of others purify and free us from our ego. Submit yourself to the blows of God and love His tools in faith and humility.

It is too easy to give in, to run away when we are wrong. With Jesus Christ, receive with a calm and silent heart every unjust treatment. Your whole being rebels; your pride resists; your sensi-

tivity trembles. The light of Jesus shines above the storm: the servant is no greater than his Master (cf. John 15:20).

Impose on the disturbing elements what faith and love dictate to you: here is our cross, and the cross is our salvation. Sacrifice yourself with your eyes fixed on Christ bleeding, humiliated by beating, sweat and sputum... Let yourself be imbued with the spirit of blessing in prayer. You will come to the point of judging everything as your Master does, and all your pain will become joy to you.

"If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross, and let him follow me". (Matthew 16:24).

Indeed, do you know any other way?

IV. Reject concern for yourself

Do not talk to yourself about yourself. The moments of examining your conscience are rare and short: a few minutes at noon and in the evening. Apart from that don't think about yourself either well or badly in order not to awaken your ego or lose hope. When you think about yourself, your coarse image takes the place of God's purest Beauty in the mirror of your soul.

Three things make your soul impenetrable: avoid them.

1. Do not complain about the difficulties of your life

Life is a struggle: don't you know it? If we have to renounce ourselves, take our crosses and follow Jesus on Calvary, it is not strange at all that we have to fight, suffer, bleed or cry. Your difficulties come from your environment, your work, and your own

physical and moral weaknesses; perhaps from these three sources at once.

Establish once and for all a guideline for your soul to act towards them, taken in front of God, and when you meet them, do not allow yourself any dialogue. Alarmist monologues do not lead to anything. Do what you can; leave the rest to God's mercy. "God knows everything, can do everything and loves me": it justifies our total reliance on Him. Live with this comforting statement of the Psalmist: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Ps 23:1). When you fall asleep, whisper it every evening "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge." (Ps. 91:4). Trust Him: nothing bad will happen to you!

2. Do not overestimate your sufferings or sacrifices

Did you not agree to everything in advance when you made your vows? "Receive, Lord..." Every morning during Mass, the Church offers you Jesus as "a pure, holy and perfect offering" (Roman Canon), and you confirm this. If you understand the mystery of the cross and the meaning of your monastic life, stop feeling sorry for yourself. God loves those who give with a smile.

Therefore let Christ suffer in you; give Him your body and your heart so that He can complete in His mystical body what He began at Calvary (cf. Col 1:24). Otherwise, you are not worth the choice Jesus made for you. His holy Face, a beautiful, distorted and painful Face, turns towards you and wants to reflect in you. Stay united, calm and offer Him a pure mirror of your soul: this image, reflected in you on earth, pleases God.

3. Do not "flirt" with your soul

Fulfil God's will at all time, using the power and graces given to you at this moment. You are not asked to do anything more. Accept with all your heart the limits of your abilities. Only in heaven will you learn the degree to which God wants to bring you to holiness. Do not study His mysterious plans; do not deny Him anything intentionally. Try to please Him at every moment to the best of your ability and let Him lead you wherever He wills in His own ways, without a hectic hurry.

Don't worry about your helplessness or even, in a sense, your moral misery. You would like to see yourself beautiful and impeccable. It's a chimera, maybe pride. To the end of our life we will stay sinners and objects of the infinite mercy which God Himself desires to show us. Never collude with evil; stay detached from your moral perfection. Holiness first and foremost belongs to the theological order, and it is not us, but the Holy Ghost who pours it in our hearts (cf. Romans 5:5).

Comparing ourselves with others in virtue, worrying about our mediocrity, setting the levels of perfection, all this makes us feel disturbed and triggers spiritual noise. Saints differ from each other. Your exaltation remains the mystery of God, and He will probably not tell you anything about it. Do what you can. Love the custom of offering God the unparalleled holiness of Jesus, Mary, the saints, the dead and the living: all of this belongs to you when you draw on the treasures of the communion of saints. Sacrifice the holiness of the mystical Body of Christ which glorifies God. You are one of the members of this Body. Perhaps the least noble, but not useless. Speak with conviction, but also with confidence: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for

me a poor sinner" and live in peace under the protective wings of our loving God.

Conclusion

Thanks to God's grace, observe these instructions with patience and fidelity. Peace will descend into your soul; silence will engulf it. The picture of the Holy Trinity will shine on the peaceful mirror of purified waters.

How beautiful is a pure and lonely heart in the eyes of God! There is only one song. The song of eternity:

GLORY TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN!



Rise up and shake off any coldness. In recollection, placing your trust completely in the Immaculata and not at all in yourself; do what the Immaculata commands you, even if you do not feel like it. Do not procrastinate, but act without delay if you have the opportunity to do so.

Maximilian Maria Kolbe
October 1919



The importance of silence according to Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity

In our modern age of hustle and bustle, of computers and networking, of 24/7 media onslaught and a hectic pace of life, silence is a precious commodity. Even if one lives in a convent as I do, silence and solitude are values often misunderstood.

As most of us work in the active world, we can take solace in these words of the Carmelite sister Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, called "the saint of silence":

"As I cannot break from the world and live in solitude, give me at least solitude of heart... Solitude and silence are so precious ...I realize that one can enjoy interior solitude and silence, for what can distract a heart possessed by love? Noise reaches no further than the surface, deep down there is only Him! And He alone can satisfy our hearts. Exterior silence is not the most necessary; in certain circumstances it is even impossible. Then the soul's resource is to take refuge within itself, in that interior solitude which alone is necessary for union with God. But outward silence must be sought as much as possible, because it helps interior silence and normally leads to it: the love of silence leads to the silence of love.

God in me and I in Him, that is my life! ... but for the vision, we always possess Him as the Blessed do in heaven. How wonderful is this presence of God in us, in the inner sanctuary of one's soul! There we always find Him... Let us try never to leave Him alone, so that our lives may be an unceasing prayer."

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity was the type of silent contemplative whose overflowing apostolic action extends to the entire universe.

The Knights of the Immaculata relate to Mary as Queen, Mother, Most Pure Virgin and Model of discipleship. These are not just devotional themes but the product of a long relationship down the centuries. The Carmelite sister, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity had a special devotion to Mary. She particularly mentions her in her writings and meditations. She loved to meditate on Mary at the Visitation, when Mary after having consented to the message of the angel, hastened to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

Silence and Solitude

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity possessed in an exceptional degree this attraction for silence, which flees all created things in order to remain in faith in the presence of the living God. Her whole ascesis may be reduced to silence, in the widest sense of the word. In her eyes, silence constitutes the most fundamental requirement for the soul that desires to be raised to the divine union.

While we do not wish to confine her thoughts within too rigid limits, for that would be incompatible with the free inspirations to which under the guidance of the Holy Ghost Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity surrendered herself, we may yet distinguish three kinds of silence in her line of thought: exterior and interior silence and, finally, a wholly divine silence, in which the soul is completely passive and which is one of the highest effects of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. For want of a better name and drawing on an expression of her own, we may call it "sacred silence," or "God's silence." It is analogous to the *Divinum Silentium* of the drawing made by St. John of the Cross.

Exterior silence is not the most necessary; in certain circumstances it is even impossible. The the soul's resource then is to take refuge within itself, in that interior solitude which alone is necessary for union with God. But outward silence must be sought as much as possible, because it helps interior silence and normally leads to it; the love of silence leads to the silence of love.

Elizabeth strove to impose silence on the powers of her soul and to withdraw herself from all created things. With pitiless zeal she immolated everything: her sight, her thoughts, her heart.

This idea of complete separation from creatures had a powerful attraction for her. "Let us empty ourselves; detach ourselves from everything. Let Him be the only one, Him alone. Let us leave earth, all creatures, everything perceived by the senses."

In the midst of social gatherings and gay parties, her soul fled from the tumult and raised itself to God. "It seems to me that one can never be drawn away from Him when one acts only for Him and is ever in His holy presence, under that divine gaze that penetrates into the innermost recesses of the soul. Even in the world we can listen to Him in the silence of a heart that wills to belong to none but Him."

Sister Elizabeth had a special devotion to St. Catherine of Siena on account of the great Dominican mystic's teaching on the interior cell, wherein she had found her constant refuge in the midst of the bustling activity of men and her prodigious apostolic work on behalf of the papal policy.

This **interior silence**, so precious to Sister Elizabeth, was soon to assume for her the form of a general asceticism and take a foremost place in her mystical life. This is teaching straight from the Gospels: whoever desires to be lifted up to God in prayer must reduce to silence in himself both the empty tumult without and the din within, and retire into the depths of his soul and there in secret, "having shut the door," recollect himself in his Father's presence.

Thus did Christ pray during those silent nights in Palestine, when, at eventide, He went forth alone onto the mountain, to spend the time until morning "in the prayer of God."

The lives of the anchorites and Desert Fathers in the first centuries of the Church, in their withdrawal from all useless inter-

course, clearly show us this purifying function of silence in the primitive conception of Christian asceticism. The desert led to the silence of the soul in which God had His dwelling.

In accordance with her particular grace, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity understood this Gospel teaching: silence of all the powers of the soul, which are kept for God alone. No more tumult in the outward senses, in the imagination and sensitive self, in the memory, the understanding, the will; to see nothing, hear nothing, take pleasure in nothing; to stop at nothing that may distract the heart or retard the soul on its way to God!

First of all, the sense of **sight must be watched**. Did not the Master say: "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome." Impurity and a host of imperfections are caused by this want of watchfulness over the eyes. David, who could speak from sad experience, besought God: "Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity," that vanity of the earth which had caused his soul to fall. The virgin soul does not allow itself to cast a single look away from Christ.

Silence of the imagination and the other faculties of the soul are no less necessary. "We carry a whole interior world of sensations and impressions about with us, and it threatens to take possession of us at every moment. There also we must practice the asceticism of silence. A soul which continues to entertain itself with its memories, which indulges in any desire" apart from God, is not a silent soul as Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity understands the term. It still has "discords" and clamorous sensibilities which prevent the harmonious chorus which should never cease to rise to God from all the powers of the soul.

The understanding, in turn, must hush all human commotion within itself. The "least useless thought" would be a false note which must be silenced at any price. An overly keen intellectualism, which allows too much leeway to the understanding for its own sake, is a subtle obstacle to the true silence of soul where God is found in pure faith. Like her master, St. John of the Cross, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity was ruthless in this respect. "We must extinguish every other light," and attain to God by nakedness of spirit, and not by building a learned structure of beautiful thoughts.

Above all, there must be **silence in the will**. The whole drama of our sanctification takes place there; the will is the faculty of love. Rightly does St. John of the Cross assign to the will the final purifications that prepare the way for transforming union. Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, on the way; and on the mountain, nothing. Sister Elizabeth resolved to follow her spiritual guide to the uttermost point on the "narrow way" that leads to the summit. She strongly urges the soul that would reach divine union to rise above even its most spiritual personal tastes to the complete abnegation of all self will. "To know nothing"; to make no distinction between feeling and not feeling, enjoying and not enjoying; to be resolute in passing everything by in order that, in complete self-forgetfulness and abnegation, the soul may be united with God alone.

Thus far did Sister Elizabeth carry her ideal of silence and absolute solitude, far from all created things. We know that the last hours of her life were the living realization of this ideal.

Consequently, we must understand this ascesis of silence in its deepest sense. It is not a material separation from external things, but a solitude of spirit, a detachment from all that is not God. Silent

in the face of all happenings, whether within itself or outside, the soul "ceases to distinguish between them, but breaks through them and passes them by to rest in the Master Himself above all else."

This silence embraces everything. "A soul which listens to self, which is preoccupied with its sensibilities, which indulges in useless thoughts or desires, scatters its forces. It is not completely under God's sway. Its lyre is not in tune, so that when the Divine Master strikes it, He cannot draw forth celestial harmonies; it is too human and discordant.

"The soul which reserves anything for self in its interior kingdom, whose powers are not all 'enclosed' in God, cannot be a perfect 'praise of glory'; it is unfit to sing continually the *canticum magnum* of which St. Paul speaks, because it is not in unity. So that, instead of persevering in praise in simplicity whatever may happen, it must be continually tuning the strings of its instrument which are all a little off key."

There is **another silence**, which the soul is unable to produce by its own activity, but which **God Himself causes within it**, if it remains continually faithful, and which constitutes one of the highest fruits of the Holy Ghost: the *divinum silentium* of the drawing of St. John of the Cross. The spiritual powers are no longer dispersed in a search for things; henceforth the soul knows only God. Unity has been established.

"How necessary is this blessed unity for the soul that craves to live here below the life of the blessed—that is, of simple beings, of spirits! Did not the Divine Master mean to teach this to St. Mary Magdalen when He spoke of the *unum necessarium*? How well that great saint realized it! She had recognized her God by the light of faith under

the veil of His humanity and in the silence, and unity of her powers, she 'heard His word,' and could sing: 'My soul is continually in my hands,' and also, the little word: 'Nescivi!' — 'I do not know.'

"Yes, she knew nothing but Him. Whatever noise and bustle there was around her: 'Nescivi!' She might be blamed: 'Nescivi!' Neither care for honour nor exterior things could draw her from her sacred silence.

"Thus it is with a soul dwelling in the fortress of holy recollection. By the light of faith, it sees its God present, dwelling within it, while, in turn, the soul is so present to Him in its beautiful simplicity that He guards it with jealous care. Then, whatever turmoil there may be outside or whatever tempests within, however its honour may be assailed: 'Nescivi!' God may hide Himself, withdraw His sensible grace: 'Nescivi!' 'For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things,' it exclaims with St. Paul. Henceforth the Master has full liberty — liberty to infuse Himself into the soul, to give Himself ' according to the measure of the giving of Christ,' and the soul, thus simplified and unified, becomes the throne of Him Who changes not, because unity is the throne of the Blessed Trinity."

In a celebrated passage, St. John of the Cross alludes to the silence of the Trinity: "One word spoke the Father, which Word was His Son, and this word He speaks ever in eternal silence..." Sister Elizabeth found, in this silence of the Trinity, the model of her own: "Let a deep silence reign in the soul, the echo of that Word which is sung in the Trinity."

By the transforming union, the soul enters into this silence of God. Everything in it is stilled; nothing of earth remains, there is no light but the light of the Word, no love but Eternal Love. The soul is clothed in divinity. Its life rises to a plane far above all the

restlessness of created things and dominates them; it enters into communion with Immutable Life and becomes, in Sister Elizabeth's own words, "as calm and changeless as though it were already in eternity."

By a special, most secret touch of the Holy Ghost, the life of the soul is borne away into the unchanging and silent Trinity. The soul still lives by faith here below; yet by one of the highest effects of the gift of wisdom, it lives by God, after the manner of God, wholly absorbed in God. Henceforth it hears only the Eternal Utterance: the generation of the word and the inspiration of Love. The whole universe is for it as if it were not. At this stage, face to face with the mystery of God, silence is the soul's great refuge," a profound and deep silence, that silence of which David spoke when he cried: 'Silence is Thy praise.'

Yes! that is the most perfect praise, for it is sung eternally in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity."

The divine way of life sets the pattern for the virtues of the soul which has reached such heights. Forgetful of self and stripped of everything earthly, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity was raised to that height in the last days of her life, there to seek her ideal of silence and solitude in the bosom of God. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." As she writes: "'God,' says St. Denis, 'is the great Solitary.' My Master bids me imitate this perfection, to render Him homage by living in strict solitude. The Divinity dwells in eternal and profound solitude. He cares for the needs of His creatures, without in any way leaving it, for He never goes out from Himself, and this solitude is nothing but His Divinity."

"I must guard against being withdrawn from this holy interior silence by keeping myself always in the same state, the same

isolation, the same retirement, the same detachment. If my desires, my fears, my joys or my sorrows, if all the impulses coming from these four passions, are not completely ordered to God, I shall not be solitary; there will be turmoil within me. Therefore, calm, the slumber of the powers, the unity of the whole being is needed. 'Hearken, O daughter ... incline thy ear; forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty.' This injunction is, I feel, a call to silence. 'Hearken ... incline thy ear.' But in order to listen, we must forget our 'father's house,' that is, whatever pertains to the natural life, of which the Apostle says: 'If you live according to the flesh you will die.' To forget our people is more difficult, for this 'people' is that world which is, as it were, a part of ourselves. It includes our feelings, memories, impressions, *etc.* In a word, it is self. We must forget it, give it up. Then when the soul has broken with it and is wholly delivered from all it means, 'the King shall greatly desire' its beauty, for beauty at least God's beauty is unity."

"His creature, who is deeply recollected in her interior solitude, greatly desires her beauty. He leads her into that immense and infinite solitude, into that 'large place' of which the Psalmist sings, which is His very Self."

This supreme solitude establishes the soul in the very silence of the Trinity. In the sublime aspiration with which she ends her prayer, Sister Elizabeth takes her refuge in that solitude, there to lose herself, even here below, in the tranquil and unchangeable Trinity. "O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to become wholly forgetful of self, that I may be immovably fixed in Thee, as changeless and calm as though my soul were already in Eternity. May nothing disturb my peace or draw me out of Thee, O my

immutable Lord, but may I at every moment penetrate more deeply into the depths of Thy mystery...

"...O my 'Three,' my All, my Beatitude, Infinite Solitude, Immensity wherein I lose myself, I yield myself to Thee as Thy prey. Bury Thyself in me that I may be buried in Thee until I depart to contemplate in Thy Light the abyss of Thy greatness."

Union with God

The Knights of the Immaculata relate to Mary as Queen, Mother, Most Pure Virgin and Model of discipleship. These are not just devotional themes but the product of a long relationship down the centuries. The Carmelite sister, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity had a special devotion to Mary. She particularly mentions her in her writings and meditations. She loved to meditate on Mary at the Visitation, when Mary after having consented to the message of the angel, hastened to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

The purpose of prayer is contact with God, union with God. The Immaculata leads us again and again back to the essentials when we, in our superficiality, forget or neglect the real meaning of prayer. And what is the essential thing? Living solitude as a twosome, being "alone with the Solitary One".

Blessed Elizabeth of the Holy Trinity was able to comprehend the prayer life of the Immaculata in an especially profound way: "What must have gone on in the Blessed Virgin's soul when she possessed within herself the Word-made-flesh, the gift of God after the Incarnation? With what silence, recollection and adoration did she bury herself in the depths of her soul so as to embrace this God, Whose Mother she had become?" Her whole life was unceasing, silent adoration of the Divine Word, completely

immersed in the loving life of the Most Holy Trinity. "She kept all these words and pondered them in her heart.' That is the best definition of meditation, of contemplative prayer. It seems to me that the conduct of the Blessed Virgin during the months between the Annunciation by the angel and the birth of Jesus is the model for all interior souls. With what peace and recollection Mary got up and set about doing everything. All, even the most commonplace things were divinized in her, for through it all she kept adoring the gift of God. But this did not keep her from devoting herself to external things when necessary, from practicing love of neighbour. The Gospel tells us that Mary 'went into the hill country in haste into a city of Judah, and she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth.' Her external love of neighbour never diminished the ineffable vision that she contemplated." "There is one creature that was the honour of the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. She responded fully to the divine election about which the Apostle speaks: she was always pure, spotless, flawless in the eyes of the Thrice-Holy God. Her soul is so simple; the movements of her soul are so profound, that no one can reach her. She seems to reproduce on earth the life of the divine Being, of simple Being. She is so transparent, so light, that one could mistake her for light itself. Yet she is only the mirror of the Sun of Justice, *speculum justitiæ*. 'The Virgin kept all these things in her heart.' Her whole story can be summed up in these few words: she lived in her heart, so deeply that our sight can no longer follow it. When I read in the Gospel that Mary hastened to the hill country of Judah in order to perform her charitable service to her cousin Elizabeth, then I see her passing by, so beautiful, so peaceful, so majestic, so interiorly recollected with the Divine Word. As in His case, so with her also it was always the

same prayer: *Ecce* — Behold, I am.... what? The handmaid of the Lord, the least of all creatures. And she, His Mother, said that."

Therefore our prayer, too, must resemble this, even though it may assume various forms according to the mood, the character and the state of life of the person praying, as well as the circumstances and various types of prayer. We can say that prayer is always defined by two fundamental lines: love of God and love of neighbour. Sometimes the goal is God Himself, to meditate on God alone, to glorify, console or love Him, to ask Him for forgiveness and to make ourselves little in His presence, to allow ourselves to be led, taught and loved by Him. It consists of drinking from the spring, an anticipation of the eternal homecoming, leaving time so as to "live a bit of eternity". "O my God, O Trinity Whom I adore, help me to forget myself completely so as to dwell in You, motionless and peaceful, as though my soul were already abiding in eternity. Nothing should be able to disturb my peace or draw me away from You, O my Unchanging Lord; instead every minute should lead me further into the depths of Your mystery!"

St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort compares Mary to a magnificent mountain on which God has taken up His dwelling place, "on which Jesus teaches and dwells forever, where one is transfigured with Him, where one dies with Him, where one ascends with Him into Heaven." Therefore we must unite ourselves with Mary in prayer, and that means climbing this mountain, our ascent to God. The same saint calls Mary the oratory, the house in which God dwells, the place in which we find Him. Only in this house is there the right atmosphere: most profound recollection, reverent silence, ineffable beauty and simplicity, the incense of adoration, the atmosphere of God's presence, Heaven on earth!

A short the biography of Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity

I believe that in Heaven, my mission will be to attract souls into interior recollection, by helping them leave themselves and cleave to God with a very simple, very loving movement; to keep them in that great silence, within, which allows God to imprint Himself in them and transform them into Himself.

Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity

Elizabeth Catez was born on the 18th of July 1880, near Bourges in central France, where her father was a soldier, as was his father. She was baptized on Sunday, the 22nd of July, the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalen.

When she was 11, she made her First Communion. She said, "God took possession of my heart." Her name means "House of God".

At 14 she knew she wanted to enter the Carmelite convent, but her mother would not hear of it, even with a priest coming to the side of Elizabeth.

Our Saint was obedient to her mother and waited upon the will of God. Rather than brood she took on a joy in life. All the while Carmel beckoned her on. At 18 she conferred with a priest who concluded that Elizabeth belonged in the cloister.

She wrote to her aunt that "I have found my heaven on earth in my dear solitude of Carmel where I am alone with God alone." During her year as a novice, she began a long period of purification, known only to the superior and prioress. She professed her perpetual vows on the 11th of January 1903: "My joy is profound and divine, such as cannot be expressed ... an entire life to be spent in silence, adoration, heart-to-heart with the Divine Bridegroom ... may I fully accomplish His will."

In March of 1906 her health declined, a bout of tuberculosis and then the painful trial of Addison's disease, which affects the adrenal glands. Moreover she suffered from severe headaches and ulcers. She spent the last 8 months of her life in the Carmel infirmary, which was for her a long retreat.

She asked her mother for the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes before which she had prayed and received many favours. She embraced the statue of Our Lady, calling the statue, "Gate of Heaven".

When asked about her mission in Heaven, she answered: "To draw souls to interior recollection."

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity died on the 9th of November 1906 and was beatified on the 25th of November 1984.



www.militia-immaculatae.org

The *Militia Immaculatae* Foundation continues the ideal of Saint Maximilian. It publishes and distributes books, brochures, magazines and folders about the Immaculate.

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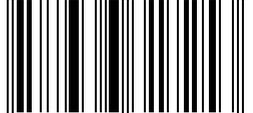
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