

Spirituality of Synodality

Synodality and Silent Listening

Fr. Donald Chambers



Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit! You inspire new tongues and place words of life on our lips: keep us from becoming a “museum Church”, beautiful but mute, with much past and little future. Come among us, so that in this synodal experience we will not lose our enthusiasm, dilute the power of prophecy, or descend into useless and unproductive discussions. Come, Spirit of love, open our hearts to hear your voice! Come, Holy Spirit of holiness, renew the holy and faithful People of God! Come, Creator Spirit, renew the face of the earth!

Amen

CLASS OBJECTIVES

- To explore the meaning of silent listening in spirituality
- To practice silent listening at selected moments during the reflection with the lead question, **“What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?”**

What are the unique features of the synodality spirituality?





COMMUNITARIAN:

We are **COMPANIONS** on a journey. We “travel the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity.

ENCOUNTER:

What are the characteristics of this encounter?

- Complete presence
- Conversion
- Listening and speaking out
- Discernment
- Word of God based



**Synodality
Spirituality is a
way of life –
*modus operandi et
modus vivendi.***

What is the purpose of this synodal journey?

- For the People of God to grow/mature/develop this synodal spirituality.
- It is an opportunity to deconstruct to judgmental way of relating of relating to each other and the Holy Spirit and reconstruct a new way of relating through listening.





https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7_wHi0PNHg

1. Can you remember and recall any unknown journey in your personal, personal, or pastoral life (family, community, parish, or diocese) and how negotiate the **unknownness** of the journey?
2. Identify who played the role of the **protagonist, the Crowd, Apostles, and antagonist?**
3. How did the community listen or did not listen to the **Holy Spirit?**

Spiritual Conversation Method:

- This method promotes **active participation, attentive listening, reflective speaking, and spiritual discernment.**
- Participants form small groups of about 6-7 persons from diverse backgrounds.
- This method takes about at least an hour and comprises three rounds.
- In the first round, everyone takes equal turns to share the fruit of his or her prayer, in relation to the reflection questions circulated beforehand



**SIMPLY LISTEN
DEEPLY TO EACH
PERSON AND ATTEND
TO HOW THE HOLY
SPIRIT IS MOVING
WITHIN ONESELF,
WITHIN THE PERSON
SPEAKING, AND IN
THE GROUP AS A
WHOLE.**

SILENT LISTENING

Attending to how the Holy Spirit is moving:

1. within oneself,
2. within the person speaking, and
3. in the group



Listen to the Spirit



Leave a gap where the Spirit has to enter and surprise us



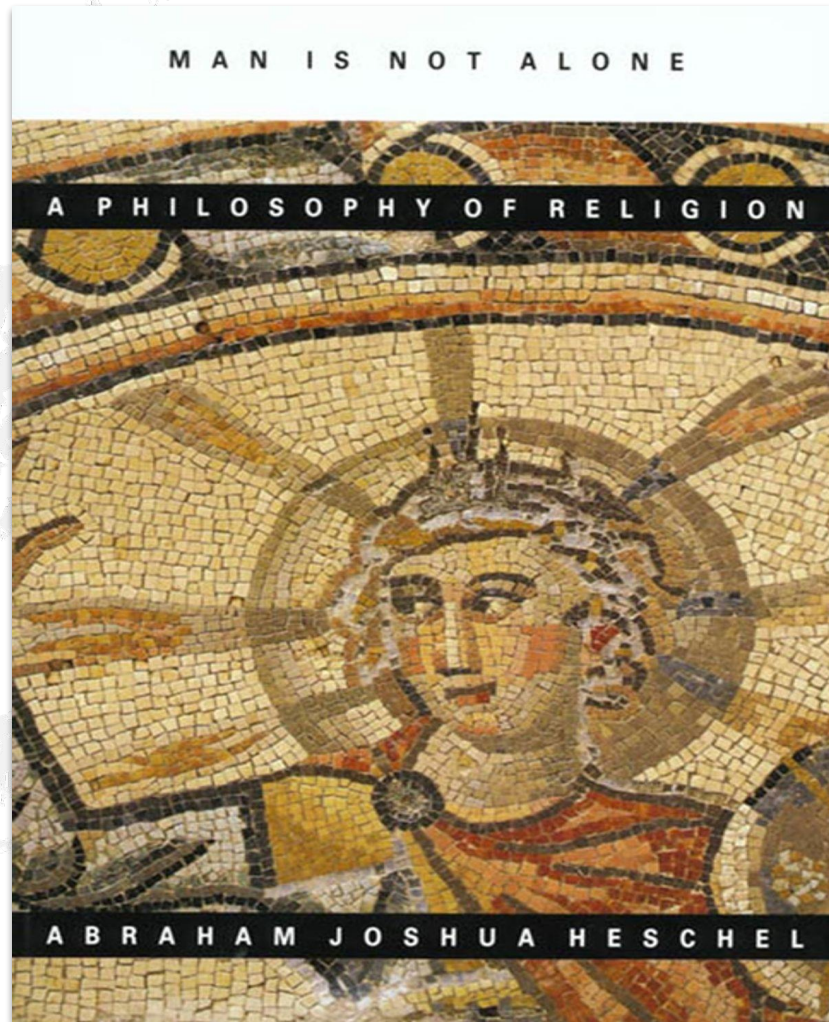


“Pope Francis is showing us the way when in each synod he insists on stopping after every four interventions and leaving a time of silence. It is a way of saying: this whole project of Church is not about us and our opinions; it is the Spirit of God who is the real mover. Personally I think this is why Pope Francis can be unperturbed by the politics and the arguments. He knows that we have to go below those levels, those categories of right and left, conservative and liberal. We have to go deeper, below ideologies, to where the Spirit is at work. And we have to let that Spirit do the work.”

MOMENT OF SILENCE

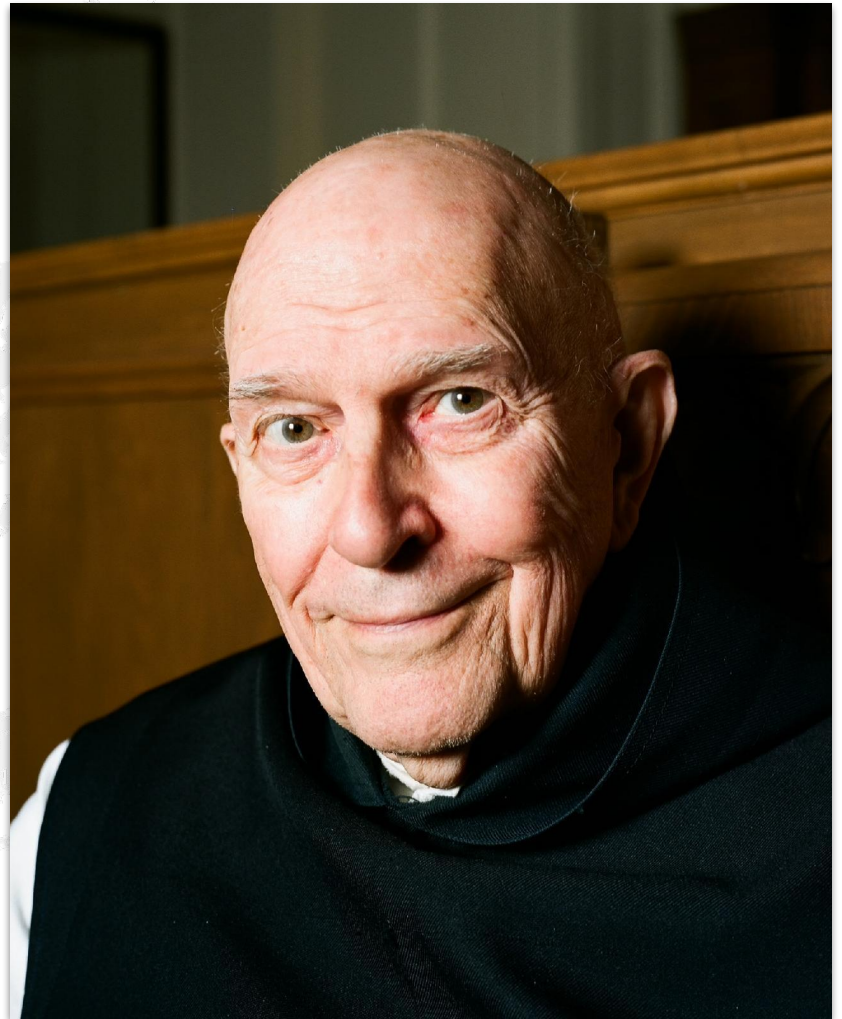
*“To become aware
of the ineffable is to
part company with
words”*


(Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*)



*"Silence is the
language God speaks
and everything else is a
bad translation."*

(Father Thomas Keating)



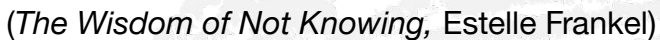
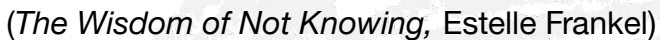


A time to tear, and a
time to sew; a time to
keep silence, and a
time to speak;

~ Ecclesiastes 3:7 ESV

@PrimoBibleVerses

(*The Wisdom of Not Knowing*, Estelle Frankel)



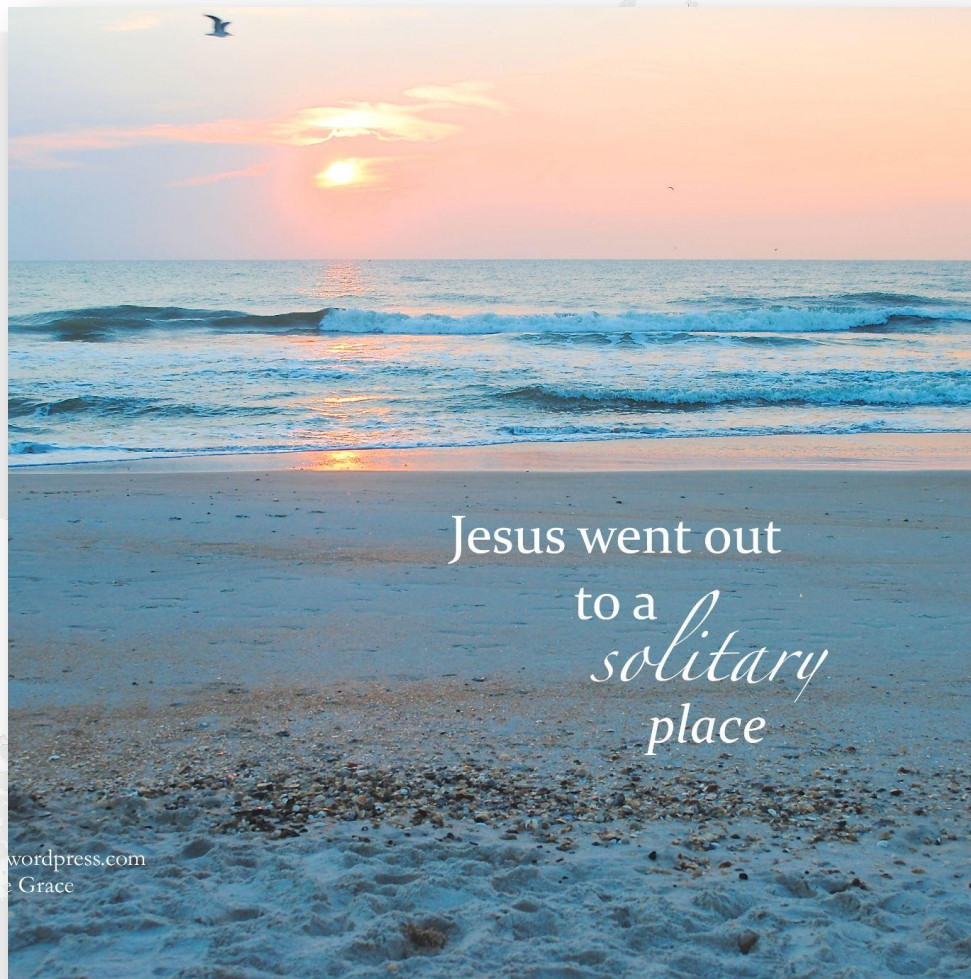
Jewish mystics refer to the **in-between** spaces as “**white fire of Torah.**”

The “**white fire of Torah or white space**” is a direct contrast to the “**black fire of Torah.**” While the “white fire” is the “wordless and silence existing in a timeless realm,” the “black fire” comprises of the written words, stories, and commandments.

Kol dmamah dakah

God's voice speaking silence or "the still, small voice" – God's revelation.

Kol – God's voice. *Dmamah* – silence and stillness



Jesus went out
to a
solitary
place

wordpress.com
Grace

Fr. Armand Nigro, *Prayer – A Personal Response to God's Presence*

“Since we feel uncertain about this, we do most or all of the talking or meditating, or we fill-in the time with spiritual reading or something ‘profitable’, but we are reluctant to empty ourselves and abandon ourselves to His presence and movement so that in silence He can communicate Himself to us the way he prefers..”



Faced with such violation which has forced her [Caribbean woman] into a space of non-being, she endures a period of deep powerlessness . . . What happens next is shrouded in darkness . . . The moment between dying and rising, a double 'kenotic' encounter between the divine and the human takes place. . . The transcendent God in whom she puts her trust . . . 'comes down' emptying God's self of all transcendence . . .

Diane Jagdeo

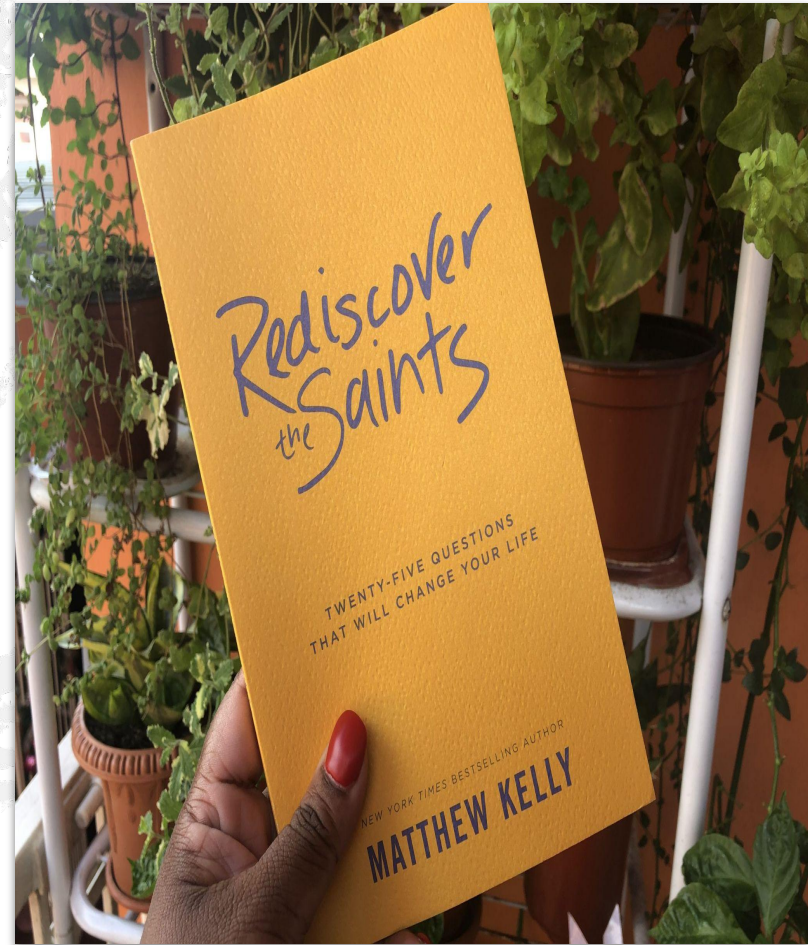


PAUSE FOR SILENT LISTENING

What is the relevance of silence in Spirituality?

“The deepest transmission of spiritual thoughts occurs in a place beyond words and thoughts...”

(St. Ignatius in Matthew Kelly's *Rediscovering the Saints*)



**Silence is the awareness of
being in the present; to be
aware of what's happening
within me and around me.
There are two dimensions
of silence.**



THE FIRST DIMENSION IS INTERNAL

SILENCE IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT

**". . . in silence we hear our own cries of
fear and pain and resistance . . .
In silence we come to know ourselves."**

“
Silence frees us
from our public
selves and steeps
us in our spiritual
selves so that we
have more to give to
the rest of the world
in the future.
”

Radical Spirit

12 WAYS TO LIVE A FREE
AND AUTHENTIC LIFE

Joan Chittister

AUTHOR OF BETWEEN THE DARK AND THE DAYLIGHT



THE FIRST DIMENSION IS INTERNAL

SILENCE IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT

“We can use silence to avoid the world, its problems, and our responsibility to them. . . dissociate from the people around us and tell ourselves that we have done a holy thing. But if we do, we are misusing silence, debasing its spiritual value, and making ourselves our own god, whom we go inside ourselves to worship.”

THE SECOND DIMENSION OF SOCIAL OR EXTERNAL

IT'S THE LIFE-GIVING PART OF HUMAN COMMUNITY

Silent Listening or Listening of the Heart

www.synod.va



THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Silence is good when it is teaching me about me and urging me on to become even more of the best of myself. Silence is good when I am listening to the other intently . . . Silence is good when I refuse to sin with my tongue. Silence is always good when it is the monk's cell to which I go (Secret/incognito/hidden life) to hear the voice in me that is divine . . .



“We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass- grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls.”

Mother Teresa



PAUSE FOR SILENT LISTENING

FORMS OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION

ADORATION

“The Synod is a process of spiritual discernment, of ecclesial discernment, that unfolds in adoration, in prayer and in dialogue with the word of God....”

(Homily of Pope Francis, October 10, 2021)

One cannot know the Lord without this habit of adoring, of adoring in silence. I believe, if I am not mistaken, this prayer of adoration is the prayer least known by us, it is the one we do the least”, as if it were a “waste of time before the Lord, before the mystery of Jesus Christ”. Instead, we should rediscover “the silence of Adoration: he is the Lord and I adore him....”

(Pope Francis, Morning meditation, 20th October 2016)



LECTIO DIVINA

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL

Lectio Divina

with the
Sunday
Gospels

The Year of Mark – Year B



The basic principle of *lectio divina* is that the Bible reading is a personal encounter with God . . . In *lectio divina*, we love the text, linger over it, read it over and over, let it remain with us. . . it stirs up feelings; we find ourselves identifying with the characters – we feel for them, admire them or dislike them. We are caught up in the movement of the text, its suspense, its dramatic reversals of fortune, its unanswered questions. Gradually, we ‘recognise’ the text; we find that we have lived the sequence of events ourselves, or have seen them lived in others who have touched our lives. . . ”

(Michel de Verteuil, *Lectio Divina, The Year of Luke – Year C, 1-2*)

VISIO DIVINA

Visio Divina is translated as “divine seeing”. It is related to the prayer form **Lectio Divina** (divine reading), but instead of Scripture, this form of prayer uses visual elements such as **paintings, icons, stain glass windows, sculpture** to help set your mind on prayer. It allows God to speak into your heart through the image.

MINDFUL MEDITATION



“... to pay attention to the breath – helps us stay focused on our immediate experience. When we find ourselves thinking about the past or future during meditation, we simply return to the present moment focusing our awareness on the breath. Each breath, then, becomes an opportunity to practice mindfulness. By maintaining a daily meditation practice, we become more mindful throughout the day, noticing our thoughts, feelings, and sensations as they arise in the here and now. This capacity enables us to distinguish more easily between fantasy and reality, fear and fact....”

(Estelle Frankel, *The Wisdom of Not Knowing*)

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

“Meditation is the very simple process by which we prepare ourselves, in the first instance, to be at peace with ourselves so that we are capable of appreciating the peace of the God-head within us. . . . as we become more and more relaxed in ourselves, and the longer we meditate, the more we become aware that the source of our new-found calm in our daily lives is precisely the life of God within us....”

(John Main, Word Into Silence, ed. Laurence Freeman, 2)



“The all-important aim in Christian meditation is to allow God’s mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only a reality, but the reality in our lives; to let it become that reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are....”

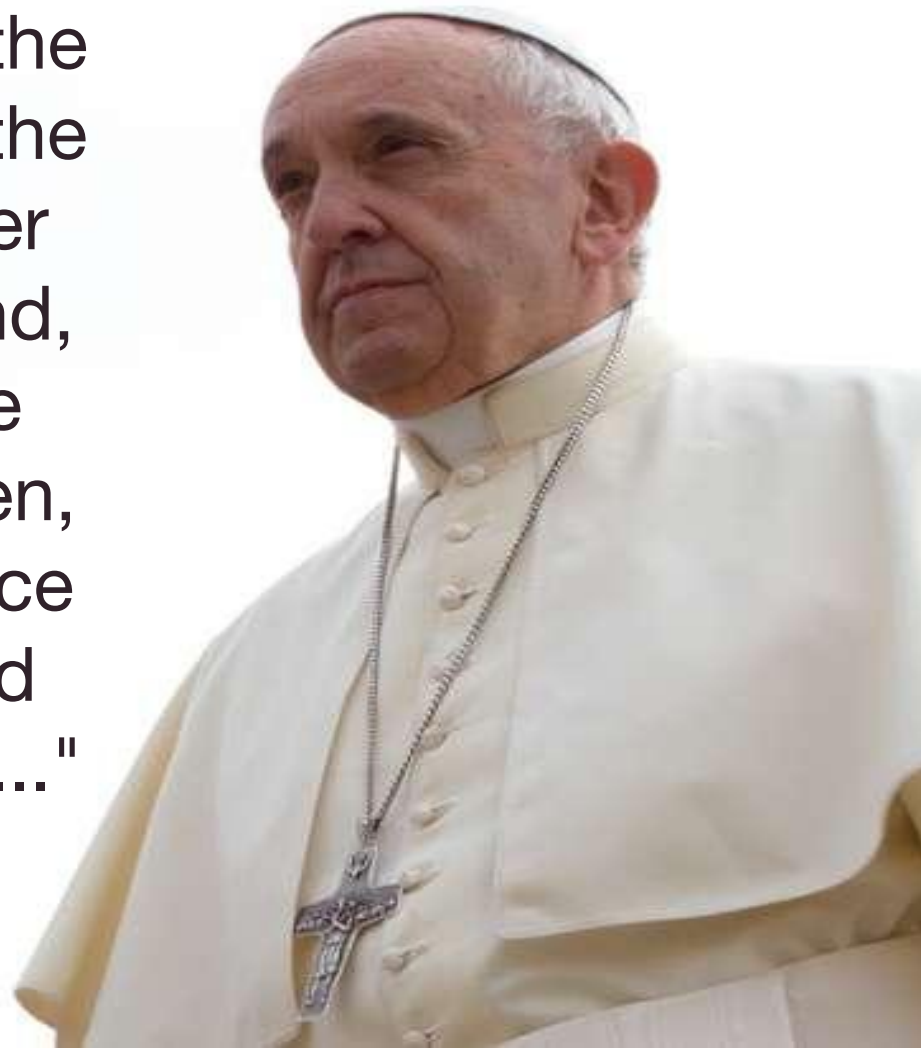
(John Main, *Word Into Silence*, ed. Laurence Freeman, 3)



SILENCE IN THE MASS

"Silence is not reduced to the absence of words, but (is) the availability to listen to other voices: that of our heart and, above all, the voice of the Holy Spirit." In silence, then, we discover "the importance of listening to our soul and then opening it to the Lord..."

(Pope Francis)



SILENCE & MEETINGS

“At mid-morning came the chance to model the synodal method, when we broke into pre-assigned small language groups of about twenty people each . . . The method was interesting. After introductions we reflected silently for five minutes, preparing our input. Each person spoke for a maximum of three minutes. Then came five more minutes of silent reflection. Then, after re-reading their notes each person shared for further two minutes whatever had enlightened or resonated with them. (The guidance we were given beforehand invited us to consider what the Spirit seemed to be calling us to, what paths were being opened, and to not “inner spiritual movements” of joy or sadness, anxiety or confidence, consolation or desolation). Finally, there was a free-form time of twenty minutes for ‘discerning and elaborating the synthesis’ . . .”

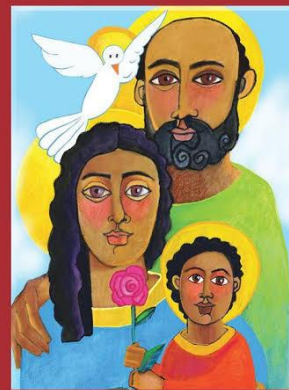
(Austin Iverigh, Commonweal, October 21, 2021)

CONTEMPLATION & FAMILY LIFE

“Raising small children,
if it is done with love
and generosity, will do
for you exactly what
private prayer does...”

(Domestic Monastery, 9)

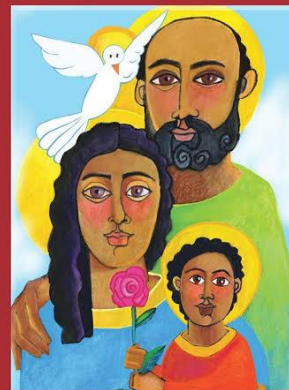
DOMESTIC MONASTERY



RONALD ROLHEISER

Monks and contemplative nuns withdraw from the world to try to become less selfish, more tender, and more in harmony with the mild. To achieve this, they pray for long hours in solitude. Mothers with your children are offered the identical privilege: withdrawal, solitude, the mild. But they do not need the long hours of private prayer – the demands and mildness of the very young are a functional substitute...”
(Domestic Monastery, 14)

DOMESTIC MONASTERY

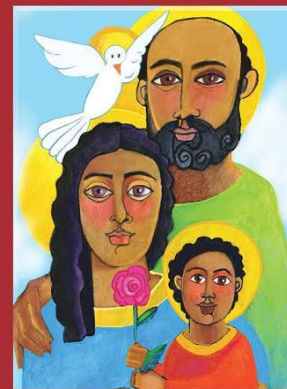


RONALD
ROLHEISER

“ . . . her constant contact with young children, the mildest of the mild, gives her a privileged opportunity to be in harmony with the mild and learn empathy and unselfishness....”

(Domestic Monastery, 13)

DOMESTIC MONASTERY



RONALD
ROLHEISER

PAUSE FOR SILENCE

“Identify a word, a phrase, or an image that captures what you believe the Holy Spirit saying to the Church today?”

**[https://www.youtube.com
/watch?v=qfwxKCg4vKA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfwxKCg4vKA)**



Thank You!