



QUIET DAY: INTRODUCTION

First of all we are very thankful that you might be joining us, albeit remotely, for our Passiontide Quiet Day this year. The coronavirus pandemic may have forced us into physical self-isolation, but we remain what we have always been: members of the Body of Christ, joined together in the spirit not only with each other but with Christians throughout the ages.

Whether or not you are able to participate in full, we hope that this Quiet Day will be a means of bringing to you and those around you some measure of peace, joy and devotion as the Church enters its celebration of the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It comes as a surprise to some people that monks and nuns have Quiet Days and Retreats. But we do! And every year we set aside the Friday before Palm Sunday as a Quiet Day in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. In many respects the day resembles all the others in the year, except that we try to keep total silence. This is not just for its own sake, but in order that we might listen to what the Lord wants to say to us. As St Benedict famously says at the beginning of his Rule, ‘Listen carefully...listen carefully with the ear of your heart...’.

“This is the key to our Quiet Day: to focus on whatever we are doing, and to do it with as much care and love as we can muster, ‘listening’ in the broadest sense – being alert, curious and aware of what we often take for granted; that we are constantly in the presence of the God who is love” – Br Stuart

How will it work?

SILENCE

This can be a daunting prospect for some and, depending on your circumstances, very ambitious. As the name suggests, silence is an integral part of the discipline. But don’t worry if you can only commit to a morning or a couple of hours. It is better to be realistic.

Silence means not just refraining from talking, it also means fasting from distractions such as phones or internet. These are just as “noisy”, if not more so, than the occasional conversation.

THE TIMETABLE

Our Quiet Day is structured around the normal monastic timetable, which includes time for prayer, work – including creative tasks - reading and meals. When faced with a large expanse of “empty” time, having a structure to your day is very important. In so far as you are able to, we invite you to follow the same timetable.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

The six monastic Offices for each day have also been made available for you to use. As the psalms and some of the readings are not given in full, you will need a Bible (with a psalter) to hand. At Mucknell we use the NRSV for readings and a contemporary American version of the psalter, but you can use whatever you prefer/have at hand.

We have also included the readings for the Eucharist, which may provide material for meditation. Unfortunately our internet connection is not up to streaming our services live. However we have made recordings the Office hymns, and these are available on the Quiet Day post as well as being embedded into the Offices themselves.

Br Ian and Sr Alison have also written reflections on passages from today’s Rule and Gospel.

A walk through the day

To explain a little more about our timetable Br Stuart has put together this ‘walk through’, together with suggestions for how you might like to spend the time between prayer and meals.

6.00AM

The first formal act of worship in our day is the Office of Readings. Some of us are not at our most awake at this time, and although the temptation might be to get up as late as possible, try and allow yourself some time for preparation: to be present, both to yourself and to the Spirit.

Some of us have a very strong coffee at this point, and it might be a good idea to centre yourself with a short prayer, poem or meditation.

Let Your God Love You

Be silent.
Be still.
Alone.
Empty
Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.

God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.

Let your God—
Love you.

By Edwina Gateley

Once the Office of Readings is over we either have breakfast, remain in the Oratory or go to the solitude of our cell.

7.00AM

We sing Lauds, after which solitude time continues. This is a good time to practice *lectio divina* or other spiritual reading. This way you will have something to take with you and meditate on as you go through the day.

8.45AM

We return to the Oratory for Terce, at the end of which Abbot Thomas will read the Chapter of St Benedict's Rule appointed for the day. This will be Chapter 52, 'The Oratory of the Monastery'.

Chapter 52: The Oratory of the Monastery

'The Oratory ought to be what it is called and nothing else is to be done or stored there. After the Work of God [which is what Benedict calls the Offices] all should leave in complete silence and with reverence for God, so that any who wish to pray alone will not be disturbed by another's insensitivity. Moreover, anyone who, at other times, wishes to pray privately may simply go in and pray, not in a loud voice, but with tears and heart-felt devotion. Accordingly, any who do not pray in this manner are not to remain in the Oratory after the Work of God, as we have said; then they will not interfere with anyone else'.

This would be a good time to read Br Ian's reflection on the Rule.

The Community then disperse to carry out our domestic work, or if our morning rota allows us some free time, to take the opportunity to do some reading or other creative work: basket weaving, icon writing, gardening, calligraphy or lace-making being some of the favourite activities here.

NOON

We assemble for the Eucharist. Entering the Oratory I often think of Ann Lewin's poem, *Entrance*:

Pause at the threshold
Of the sacred space;
Bow low,
Prepare for fresh
Encounter
With the Holy One.

Sr Alison has written a short reflection on today's Gospel reading in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

1.00PM

Time for our 'frugal' Friday lunch of bread/Ryvita, cheese and apples, which is eaten in silence and without a reading. This is followed by time for rest, or 'Prone' as one of our former Sisters called it.

2.15PM

Back in the Oratory for None.

The mind can be a bit foggy after lunch and energy at a low ebb, so if the weather is clement and it is possible to go outside, this might be a good time to do some gardening or go for a walk. Look out for, and enjoy, the signs of spring: early blossom, the opening of new buds, and birdsong.

5.30PM

The Office of Vespers is followed by another hour of 'solitude'. Again this is a good opportunity to do some silent prayer, meditation, *lectio* or other spiritual reading.

7.00PM

Supper is another simple meal eaten in silence. Afterwards is the time when we would usually have recreation. But tonight it is an opportunity to reflect on the day and ask, 'What have I heard? What have I learned?'

8.00PM

Compline and the beginning of the 'Greater Silence'. Although 8.30pm might be a little early to go to bed, try to avoid the temptation of staying up and reconnecting with the world outside. Do something gentle and relaxing; try to still down before sleep. In his Rule Benedict bans the reading of the Pentateuch before bed so as not to disturb the monks before bedtime!