

A DEVOTIONAL FOR THE ELECTION SEASON

By Father Santiago Rodriguez

Devotional Four: Silence and Deep Listening

For God alone, my soul in silence waits. Psalm 62:1

SILENCE IN THE MIDST OF NOISE: A PATH TO PEACE

In an increasingly noisy world, especially amidst the election news cycle, deep listening is essential for our peace and for growing in wisdom. Christian monks and nuns who retired to desert caves and monasteries to pray found that deep listening is a form of engagement rather than escapism. They meditated on the real presence of God in the silence around them.

Deep listening is a call to live fully in the present moment, helping us find calm amidst the chaos. It is a practice of intentional, focused attention that goes beyond just hearing words or sounds. In this sense, deep listening is both outward (listening to others or the world around you) and inward (listening to your own thoughts, emotions, and the presence of God).

Just as the desert fathers and mothers trained their ears to meditate on the acoustic landscape of the desert, we can train our ears and hearts to listen deeply. Silence is more than an absence of sound; it is an invitation to encounter the Word of God. Let us learn the art of silence, for in doing so, we can make space for the true Word to speak within us.

ENCOUNTERING SILENCE AND PRACTICING DEEP LISTENING

To engage in moments of deep listening, we can incorporate some of the following practices.

Create a Sacred Space: Find a quiet corner in your home or outdoors. It doesn't need to be elaborate - just a place where you can be still and open to God's presence.

Breathe Deeply: Focus on your breath. Slow, deep breathing can help quiet the noise in your mind, bringing you into a place of stillness. Spending even a few minutes breathing deeply can help restore your calm and inner peace

Listen to Nature: Spend time outdoors, listening to the sounds of nature. The desert fathers and mothers often meditated on the sounds of the wind, birds, and the earth itself as a way of tuning into God's creation.

Travel to the Desert: Kim Haines-Eitzen accompanied her book *Sonorous Desert* (thanks to Chad Eckles for the book!) with evocative audio recordings of desert environments - revealing the desert sounds that taught ancient monks and nuns about solitude and silence. You can access two of these recordings through the QR codes below.



The desert's deep sonority



Desert sounds

JOURNALING PROMPT

“What did I notice during the silence - both in my surroundings and within myself? How did the stillness make me feel, and what insights or emotions surfaced in the quiet?”

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 62 is an invitation to let God embrace us in silence. Read verses 1-8 slowly a couple of times. Pay attention to the words, images, phrases, or memories that are stirred within you.

- 1 For God alone my soul in silence waits; *
from God comes my salvation.
- 2 The Lord alone is my rock and my salvation, *
my stronghold, so that I shall not be greatly shaken.

3 How long will you assail me to crush me, all of you together, *
as if you were a leaning fence, a toppling wall?

4 They seek only to bring me down from my place of honor; *
lies are their chief delight.

5 They bless with their lips, *
but in their hearts they curse.

6 For God alone my soul in silence waits; *
truly, my hope is in the Lord.

7 God alone is my rock and my salvation, *
my stronghold, so that I shall not be shaken.

8 In God is my safety and my honor; *
God is my strong rock and my refuge.

An Inclusive Language Psalter, Based on the Psalms from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer (BCP)

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, we give thanks for the gift of silence in a world filled with noise and distraction. As we navigate busy seasons, especially during times of uncertainty and the election cycle, help us to turn to the stillness that only you can provide. Teach us to practice deep listening, to quiet our minds and hearts, and to open ourselves to your Word. May we find peace and wisdom in the space we create for you, and may your presence guide us through the clamor of our daily lives. Amen.

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