

Reverence in Church

"But the LORD is in His holy temple; silence before Him, all the earth!" (Hab. 2:20)

"Silence in the presence of the Lord GOD!" (Zeph. 1:7)

"Silencio!" (Spoken loudly by Pope John Paul II when Mass was interrupted)

"Wherever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment." (Cardinal Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI)

"It is not fitting that the servant should be applauded in His Master's house." (Pope St. Pius X)

"Nothing so becomes a church as silence and good order. Noise belongs to theatres, and baths, and public processions, and market-places: but where doctrines, and such doctrines, are the subject of teaching, there should be stillness, and quiet, and calm reflection, and a haven of much repose." (St. John Chrysostom, Doctor of the Church)

"Let all mortal flesh be silent, standing there...in fear and trembling; for the King of kings, the Lord of lords, Christ our God is about to be sacrificed and to be given as food to the faithful." (St. James)

"Silence is the vital space dedicated to the Lord, in an atmosphere of listening and assimilation of His Word. To remain faithful and zealous, it is necessary to know how to receive the Divine inspirations that come interiorly." (Pope John Paul II)

"Quiet is the first step to sanctification." (St. Basil the Great, Doctor of the Church)

"The worship rendered by the Church to God must be, in its entirety, interior as well as exterior... But the chief element of divine worship must be interior" (Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei)

"Above all I recommend to you always, recollection, that holy solitude, that inner sacred desert in which your soul ought always to be alone in the bosom of the heavenly Father, in the silence of faith and holy love." (St. Paul of the Cross)

"Silence, all mankind, in the presence of the LORD! for he stirs forth from his holy dwelling." (Zech. 2:17)

"As in all the churches of the holy ones, women should keep silent in the churches, for they are not allowed to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. But if they want to learn anything, they should ask their husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in the church." (St. Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. 14:33-35)

"A woman must receive instruction silently and under complete control. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. Further, Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. But she will be saved through motherhood, provided women persevere in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." (St. Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Tim. 2:11-15)

"When you are before the altar where Christ reposes, you ought no longer to think that you are amongst men; but believe that there are troops of angels and archangels standing by you, and trembling with respect before the sovereign Master of Heaven and earth. Therefore, when you are in church, be there in silence, fear, and veneration." (St. John Chrysostom, Doctor of the Church)

"They shall also banish from churches all those kinds of music, in which, whether by the organ, or in the singing, there is mixed up any thing lascivious or impure; as also all secular actions; vain and therefore profane conversations, all walking about, noise, and clamour, that so the house of God may be seen to be, and may be called, truly a house of prayer." (Council of Trent, Twenty-second Session)

"Holiness befits the house of the Lord; it is fitting that he whose abode has been established in peace should be worshipped in peace and with due reverence. Churches, then, should be entered humbly and devoutly; behavior inside should be calm, pleasing to God, bringing peace to the beholders, a source not only of instruction but of mental refreshment... The consultations of universities and of any associations whatever must cease to be held in churches, so also must public speeches and parliaments. Idle and, even more, foul and profane talk must stop; chatter in all its forms must cease. Everything, in short, that may disturb divine worship or offend the eyes of the divine majesty should be absolutely foreign to churches, lest where pardon should be asked for our sins, occasion is given for sin, or sin is found to be committed." (Second Council of Lyons)

"But bear with me, I beseech you, and be persuaded by me, and, if it seem good to you, let us even now establish this rule, that no hearer be permitted to applaud in the midst of any person's discourse, but if he will needs admire, let him admire in silence: there is none to prevent him: and let all his study and eager desire be set upon the receiving the things spoken. - What means that noise again? I am laying down a rule against this very thing, and you have not the forbearance even to hear me! - Many will be the good effects of this regulation: it will be a discipline of philosophy. Even the heathen philosophers - we hear of their discoursing, and nowhere do we find that noisy applause accompanied their words: we hear of the Apostles, making public speeches, and yet nowhere do the accounts add, that in the midst of their speeches the hearers interrupted the speakers with loud expressions of approbation. A great gain will this be to us. But let us establish this rule: in quiet let us all hear, and speak the whole (of what we have to say). For if indeed it were the case that we departed retaining what we had heard, what I insist upon is, that even so the praise is not beneficial - but not to go too much into particulars (on this point); let none tax me with rudeness - but since nothing is gained by it, nay, it is even mischievous, let us loose the hindrance, let us put a stop to the boundings, let us retrench the gambollings of the soul. Christ spoke publicly on the Mount: yet no one said aught, until He had finished His discourse. I do not rob those who wish to be applauded: on the contrary, I make them to be more admired. It is far better that one's hearer, having listened in silence, should by his memory throughout all time applaud, both at home and abroad, than that having lost all he should return home empty, not possessed of that which was the subject of his applauses. For how shall the hearer be otherwise than ridiculous? Nay, he will be deemed a flatterer, and his praises no better than irony, when he declares that the teacher spoke beautifully, but what he said, this he cannot tell. This has all the appearance of adulation. For when indeed one has been hearing minstrels and players, it is no wonder if such be the case with him, seeing he knows not how to utter the strain in the same manner: but where the matter is not an exhibition of song or of voice, but the drift and purport of thoughts and wise reflection, and it is easy for every one to tell and report what was said, how can he but deserve the accusation, who cannot tell what the matter was for which he praised the speaker? Nothing so becomes a church as silence and good order. Noise belongs to theatres, and baths, and public processions, and market-places: but where doctrines, and such doctrines, are the subject of teaching, there should be stillness, and quiet, and calm reflection, and a haven of much repose. These things I beseech and entreat: for I go about in quest of ways by which I shall be enabled to profit your souls. And no small way I take this to be: it will profit not you only, but us also. So shall we not be carried away with pride, not be tempted to love praises and honor, not be led to speak those things which delight, but those which profit: so shall we lay the whole stress of our time and diligence not upon arts of composition and beauties of expression, but upon the matter and meaning of the thoughts. Go into a painter's study, and you will observe how silent all is there. Then so ought it to be here: for here too we are employed in painting portraits, royal portraits (every one of them), none of any private man, by means of the colors of virtue - How now? Applauding again? This is a reform not easy, but (only) by reason of long habit, to be effected - The pencil moreover is the tongue, and the Artist the Holy Spirit. Say, during the celebration of the Mysteries, is there any noise? any disturbance? when we are baptizing, when we are doing all the other acts? Is not all Nature decked (as it were) with stillness and silence? Over all the face of heaven is scattered this charm (of repose). On this account are we evil spoken of even among the Gentiles, as though we did all for display and ostentation. But if this be prevented, the love of the chief seats also will be extinguished. It is sufficient, if any one be enamored of praise, that he should obtain it after having been heard, when all is gathered in. Yea, I beseech you, let us establish this rule, that doing all things according to God's will, we may be found worthy of the mercy which is from Him, through the grace and compassion of His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father together with the Holy Spirit be glory, dominion, honor, now and ever, world without end. Amen." (St. John Chrysostom, Doctor of the Church)