

The Role That Silence Plays Throughout the Liturgy

It's important to address the importance of silence in the liturgy. It may seem odd, but the silent periods of Mass, which also involve listening, are forms of active participation as well. Listening to the Word of God requires an openness to God's workings in us and prepares us to hear God's Word in the liturgy. It requires obedience to God to listen to various aspects of the liturgy. In fact, the word 'obey' actually comes from the Latin word *ob*, which means "toward" and *audire*, which means "to listen."

In addition, the silent periods of the liturgy are intended to be used to assist us in improving our interior life and to fully absorb what is taking place at different parts of the liturgy. Two specific moments of silence that stick out are after the priest gives his homily and after we have received communion. The silence after a priest's homily enables us to fully process, reflect, and meditate on the fact that we just heard the Word of God in the Scriptures and also in the priest's thoughts and teachings.

Similarly, the silence after we have received communion is meant to process, reflect, and meditate on the fact that we just consumed the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. How thankful we are that Christ suffered through his passion and has given us his Body and Blood so that we may live and be forgiven for our sins. The silence after communion enables us to fully embrace this reality and to give proper thanks.

In last week's bulletin, I discussed how important it is to have full, conscious, and active participation in our liturgy for the following reasons. For one, every aspect of the Mass is sacred; which should inspire us to give proper reverence, meaning, and intentionality throughout the liturgy. Second, we are one body in Christ, which means what we bring to the liturgy individually can impact the whole Church overall (the body). With this in mind, properly observing and participating in the silent periods of the Mass is indeed a form of active participation; which enables us to work on our interior disposition, allows us to become more open to God's workings in us, and prepares us to hear God's Word in the liturgy.