



Metropolitan Archbishop of Izmir

MARY MOTHER OF SILENCE

On the occasion of the Feast of the Assumption

Dear brothers and sisters,

In rapidly changing realities of the world, we witness change outside us and within ourselves, we come close to the end of summer, as the days begins to shorten, heralding autumn. Everything around us and within us compels to ponder on our lives, what did God send us to this world for, what is the goal of our lives. What gives meaning and illuminates our lives here on earth?

Virgin Mary, taken up to heaven in silence

In a few days we will be celebrating **the Assumption of the Virgin Mary**: this solemnity of the liturgical year helps us to keep the goal of our lives alive in our hearts, always reflecting in solitude. Virgin Mary's departure from the earth indeed a glorious event, but it took place in silence, the same reflectiveness she kept full of amazement before the newborn baby Jesus as well as under the Cross of her beloved Son, with tears in her eyes and sorrowful heart.

While reflecting on the meaning of life, one does not need philosophical justification to know that we all carry within us the desire to be happy, to find for ourselves and our loved ones everything that can satisfy us. But what is important for us to identify is, what could really satisfy us? Is it the family ties? A comfortable life? Success? What or who can quench the thirst we carry in our hearts in a definitive way?

We turn to Mother Mary, she teaches us to live our lives in silence and listen to the Word of God. Only in an atmosphere of true solitude can God speak to us. Only in silence does our heart submit to the Lord's will and desire; to the plan He has for each one of us.

We cannot isolate ourselves

Our whole life manifest that it is important to cherish, with patience, perseverance and hope, our relationships with people around us because this is an expression of the love we have for one another. It is fundamental for Christians, to help each other to grow in faith, love and hope.

The decisive relationship in Virgin Mary's life was her firm bond with God and the Son she bore in her womb. Thus, she became the mean, bridge, and instrument through which the alley of union between God and humanity, between God and each of us, is



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realized. The Virgin Mary is the expression of divine mercy for every person because through her obedience to God, the Word of God became flesh, we had the possibility of sharing in the divine life. From her we learn that it is not possible to live apart from the social fabric of human family, from the Church, from God. In the Church we have received faith and grown in the knowledge of God, but our baptismal vocation also consists in remaining loyal and faithful to this family that has given us life in God.

As at our birth we receive life with our connectedness with our mothers and later from the family and people around us. Likewise, in the Church, we are vitally bound to each other, not as slaves, but as free people, because Christ has set us free. We need to recognize that we were formed through social processes, through relationships and people who contributed in our human and spiritual growth. We have fundamental need for each other, and at the same time we have an existential need to live in true dialogue. This is a mutual need, because we cannot live alone and we cannot save ourselves alone. From this it follows that no one can claim to be always right and impose his or her opinions on others as if they are perfect and what they say is absolute truth.

Each one of us has a relationship with the Church and we are members of the community united together to Christ as the branches to the vine.

Today, the media and postmodern thought place a strong emphasis on the self-preferentiality of the individual and their choices; the absolute right to be able to do anything in the name of freedom is proclaimed. However, we know well that one cannot live without criteria, there cannot be a happy life without reference points and values. One cannot live without the law that recognizes the value and dignity of the human person.

The fullness of grace that makes Virgin Mary, daughter of the Father, Mother of Christ, bride of the Holy Spirit teaches us that we too can live similar experience provided we follow her example in silence of heart. Do we still know how to keep silent? Do we still know how to keep the secret? Do we still retain the virtue of humility that leads us to do no harm when we speak of others?

It seems that social media give us the right to enter people's private lives, the right to violate people's intimacy as if nothing is sacred place or personal anymore. Fake news, rumors and slander have become the entertainment of today's social life. And we can say, that this also applies to some extent to our local Catholic community. Sometimes, unfortunately, one speaks without having seen, from mere hearsay. One speaks without knowing the reality of others. One speaks because there is nothing left to offer outside of meaningless words. One is ready to complain without this being matched by real interest in the common good and willingness to offer one's concrete contribution. In this



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way one does so much harm to people and to the Church itself, which is the body of Christ.

Those who are spreading news that does not concern them are destroying the body of Christ. We are the remnants of the apostolic Church in Turkey. It seems that being a small, self-enclosed group pleases some people. These people ignore that this is actually the delight of the one who is the origin of all evil, sin and eternal death.

Fundamental honesty, which is part and parcel of faithfulness to the Lord's law and His Word, requires not spreading rumors, whether well-founded or unfounded, that could cause the evil and suffering of one's neighbor. Such human honesty, which is the simplest, requires confrontation, the search for truth, sound arguments, and refraining from judgment issued a priori.

By speaking ill of others, when one does not have proof of one's claims, we commit a fault. No one has the right to speak about the life of the Church without being an active part of this community that is struggling to survive. When someone, with clear and sincere intention, believes that they have something to say or to propose, he / she can confront the priests at any time and express their opinions to them. I myself, as bishop and pastor of this Church have never rejected any of those who have come to speak with me about situations, which appear problematic and in need of healing.

Do we have the right to be judges of the other?

The Apostle James writes, "Who are you to make yourself judge of your neighbor?" (Jas 4:12). It is St. Paul likewise asks, "Who are you to judge a servant who is not yours?" (Rom14:4). How can we do not to judge our neighbor? Let us read the Bible a little. Jesus himself teaches us, "Do not judge lest you be judged" (Mt 7:1), and in the Gospel of Young He says, "Do not judge according to appearances; judge with righteous judgment!" (Jn 7:24). If we know how to keep silent, we will gain the wisdom of life and be merciful, as God is merciful to each of us. Let us remember well, that in eternity we will be judged by the very criteria by which we ourselves have judged others.

The Virgin Mary, our mother teaches us the value of silence and, by introducing us into the space of prayer and relationship with God, opens the eyes of our heart to the truth. Virgin Mary is the mother of Silence.

The virgin of Nazareth observed the events around her son and kept them in her heart. Evangelist Luke in chapter 2 of his Gospel (19) describes Mary's silence in the moments after Jesus' birth, "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." And then, in the same chapter he repeats almost the same words, describing her sadness after the



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loss of Jesus in the Temple "His mother kept all these things in her heart (Lk. 2:51). In his beautiful description of Virgin Mary's silence, Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle writes thus:

"The Virgin's destiny is to be silent. It is her condition, her way, her life. Hers is a life of silence that worships the eternal Word. Seeing before her eyes, at her breast, in her arms, this same Word, the substantive Word of the Father, mute and reduced to silence because of the particular condition of her childhood, the Virgin is enclosed in a new silence, where she is transformed after the example of the Incarnate Word who is her Son, her only love. And her life thus passes from one silence to another, from a silence of adoration to a silence of transformation. Mary is silent, enveloped in the silence of her Son, Jesus. One of the sacred and divine effects of Jesus' silence is to place his most holy Mother in a life of silence: a humble, profound silence that knows how to adore incarnate Wisdom in a holier and more eloquent way than either the words of men or those of angels can. The silence of the Virgin is not the effect of stuttering and helplessness; it is a silence of light and ecstasy, a silence more eloquent, in praises to Jesus, than eloquence itself..." (Opuscles de piété, 39)

"Mary, Virgin of silence, teacher and spiritual mother, teach us to welcome the gift of silence in order to listen to God and be silent so as not to fall into the temptation of gossiping about others, of envy and slander." (E. Antenucci)

We can reiterate the truth: only silence is great, because "silence is the language of God" (E. Antenucci). God does not speak to us with our words, does not bombard us with meaningless sounds, but he listens to us continuously and will listen to the beating of our hearts until we die. Therefore, Virgin Mary is the teacher of silence, because she allowed herself to be enveloped in silence during her life, and in the same way she was welcomed silently into divine light when she left this world.

As I share these thoughts, my wish is that as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, may we all rejoice in the Lord and lift our hearts to Heaven where the Lord and his Holy Mother are waiting for us.

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+ Martin Kmetec OFM Conv.

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