

# Clip Notes

for church bulletins

Volume **2**



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## Keeping Silence

In the liturgy, we are silent, silent *together*. This is not an individual silence, even though each of us—as best as each of is able—is quiet. This is not a passive silence, even though we try to be as still as we can be. We are silent together, actively quiet, purposely still. We're silent before the liturgy begins, in order to be present to each other and thus find God. God is always present to us; we forget that sometimes, fail to hear God amid our noisy living. So before we wrestle with God in our rites, we are silent: Be still, and know that I am God.



We are silent at the words “Let us pray.” These words begin the opening prayer and prayer after communion at Mass, as well as the prayers after the psalms at morning and evening prayer. At this invitation, we pray and we pray hard and we pray hard together, so that when the priest speaks, all of our prayers are drawn to those words like metal shavings to a magnet. One voice breaks the silence with words of prayer, and one mighty voice, spoken from all of our throats, seals that prayer: “Amen!”

We are silent after readings of scripture and after the homily. How else can God

speak to us? How else are we to hear the divine voice, not only echoing from long ago in ancient words brought back to life, but speaking now, in this time, in the quiet that we provide here? After the readings and the homily, we are silent together because we are listening together for the voice on which our very lives depend, the voice that calls us into being, the voice that bids us to come out of our dumb tombs to live and to love again.

On occasion, instead of singing, we may be silent when the gifts of money are gathered for the poor and for the church, and when the gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar. And when all have been fed, when all have drank from the cup, again we are silent, caught up in the reverie of great mystery, standing together wide-eyed and satisfied, breathing quiet gratitude for life breaking out everywhere, enjoying the quiet of this moment before an eternal dawn, when God will be all in all and the final silence will be ruptured with raucous, joyous cries of “Worthy! Worthy! Worthy!”

The liturgy's silences both tax and nourish us. They tire us because they are active moments, concentrated periods of deliberate, attentive, awe-filled stillness. But they nourish us as well. They are vitamins for a life made anemic with noise, tonic for the blathering (the world's and our own) that sometimes sickens us. The moments of communal silence in the liturgy plant seeds of peace in our souls, so that in the turmoil of every day life we can find a still center inside and hear the voice of God.

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