

Fr. Perozich comments —

In 1960 singer Joe Jones put out the song, “You Talk Too Much”.
<https://genius.com/Joe-jones-you-talk-too-much-lyrics>

You talk too much, you worry me to death, • You talk too much, you even worry my pet. • You just talk, talk too much.

You talk about people that you don't know, • You talk about people wherever you go. • You just talk, talk too much.

You talk about people that you've never seen, • You talk about people, you can make me scream. • You just talk, you talk too much.

Communication with others serves my need to receive compassion, connection, to share my life and the lives others wish to share with me.

One comedienne years ago, reflecting on her experience of people together, asked the audience, “Do you know what the opposite of talking is?” She responded, “It’s not listening, it’s waiting for your turn to speak.”

When someone shares his experience, it often evokes a memory of my experience that I feel would augment the conversation. Yet sometimes that is not what really helps.

People want to be heard without comment. If they need advice, they’ll ask for it.

Others just cannot shut up, and the spiritual authors say it is because of the emptiness in their souls. I think of politicians, bishops who can’t wait to get to a mic or to write an op ed to express their opinion in order to change the minds of everyone else as if their ideas were superior. Not!

For us priests, many faithful wish to share with us; we need to make some time to listen, not necessarily to everything, but so that we can direct folk to good holy talk, to help free their souls from earthly concerns in order that their souls might be at peace to sit with God for His inspirations.

As a priest, I get “full”, and will end a conversation, retire from a group discussion, go home and be alone. Perhaps I turn on the TV, not to watch it, but so that its background noise clear the clutter from frivolous conversations. I need to shut out the noise. (I once heard from former prisoners that one of the worst things about incarceration was the constant noise and lack of silence in the jails.)

At other times I sit before Jesus and empty out all the concerns that have been brought to me so that He might enter the souls of those who are preoccupied with so many anxieties, troubles, and concerns and bring to them the peace that only He can give.

Jesus is the one who can give peace to my soul. So I shut out politicians, noisy political bishops and priests, biased media, and sometimes even friends, in order that I recover whatever sanity remains in me.

The man who has the most friends is the one who has learned to open his ears to others and moderate his speech.

Jesus calms the soul and fills it with grace.

*We are created for the saying that is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, “**Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.**”*

Scroll, Swipe, Click: What's Your "Parlor"?

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CLAIRE DWYER



Problems in the Parlor

She was a young nun who loved the Lord and spoke of Him passionately and often, edifying others who saw in her the beginnings of the saint she would become.

But St. Teresa of Avila admits early in her biography that she had a major fault: she spent far too much time in shallow (or even holy) conversations with outside visitors in the convent parlor—flirting with the ‘world’ while keeping only one foot in the very loose enclosure of her convent.

It's hard to advance on the journey to God while straddling two worlds, though. And she knew it. She described that spiritual season as "a battle and conflict between friendship with God and friendship with the world." She was reading St. Augustine's Confessions at the time and recognized her own struggle in the torment he experienced before his definitive conversion. "I was at odds with myself," admitted Augustine, "and fragmenting myself."

Teresa would come to see that while not always spiritually dangerous, such conversations and friendships were certainly a major distraction and often "a waste of time." "Although I was not offending God by them," she reflected, "I was very attached."

Even after a deep encounter with Christ and a recommitment to the life of prayer, she struggled. Not until she heard the powerful interior words, "No longer do I want you to converse with men but with angels," was St. Teresa able, by the grace of God, to break the hold that these "pastimes and satisfactions" had on her.

The Lord had much to tell her, and much work for her to do. And He needed her full attention.

The Need for Silence

St. Faustina, in her Diary, writes, "God does not give himself to a chattering soul who, like a drone in a beehive, buzzes around but gathers no honey. **A talkative soul is empty inside. It lacks both the essential virtues and intimacy with God.** A deeper interior life, one of gentle peace and of that silence where the Lord dwells, is quite out of the question. **A soul that has never tasted the sweetness of inner silence is a restless spirit that disturbs the silence of others.**" (118)

"Silence," St. Faustina says, "is a sword in the spiritual struggle. A talkative soul will never attain sanctity. The sword

of silence will cut off everything that would like to cling to the soul. **We are sensitive to words and quickly want to answer back, without taking any regard to whether it is God's will that we should speak...(The silent soul) lives almost always under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God works in a silent soul without hindrance.**" (477)

I was having a conversation recently with a dear but distant friend. We haven't seen each other in decades and we don't talk often enough. So I was surprised when she congratulated me on an upcoming book project. "How did you know?" I asked. "I saw it on social media," she told me. I was puzzled—I hadn't seen her post anything in a long time. "Well, I'm only on now for a short time each week," she explained. "I found myself getting distracted and writing answers and comebacks in my head to online conversations for days after reading them!"

Which drives home a crucial point of St. Faustina's: "One can speak a great deal without breaking silence, and on the contrary, **one can speak little and be constantly breaking silence.**" (Diary, 118, emphasis mine).

You see, we can keep our mouth closed but breach our own "enclosure"—our sacred space, that is, our interior life—by letting a lot of noise in. And so maybe we should start to wonder, although we do not live in a convent or follow a rule of silence: ***where's our parlor?***

In other words, **where's the entry point to our attention, our time, and our energy, and is it carefully guarded or constantly flashing a neon "open" sign?**

While studying the life of St. Teresa a few years ago, another friend had a piercing insight. "I think," she remarked, "you could say today that **social media is our parlor.**"

We hold in our hands and carry in our purses and pockets alluring, interesting, and always-open portals into the world.

We wear on our wrists virtual meeting places for people, ideas, images, news, commentary, quotes. Tiny screens that are like little looking-glasses into endless places of escape.

It can be fun, interesting, even inspiring sometimes. It can also be **an occasion for *endless internal noise***. And then we wonder why we have trouble making decisions. Or knowing what God wants for our lives. Or why we have no peace and serenity. We want the Holy Spirit but we don't give Him any silence to speak into. We pray for God's will and then don't listen for the answer.

We miss the very quiet ding of today's Divine Appointment.

Sometimes we need to lock the parlor doors and slip back to that chapel in the center of ourselves, the place God waits in our soul to give Himself to us. **Sometimes we need to shut down the social media and the resulting interior dialogues, to stop writing speeches and soundbites in our mind. To cut off the endless, tapping conversations. To be comfortable with just being. To know what whispers sound like. To know what God sounds like. To recognize that breeze that is His voice.**

The Need for Community and Communication

Now, I'll make an important distinction: note that my friend wasn't shutting out the world. She was **prudently finding ways to keep in touch by limiting her time online**. We can find in our friendships, close or distant, so much good.

And even our enclosed saint friends know how very important that is.

"I believe," muses St. Teresa, "that they who discuss these joys and trials for the sake of this

friendship with God will benefit themselves and those who hear them, and they will come away instructed; even without understanding how, they will have instructed their friends.” She notes that spiritual friendship is “extremely important” for those who seek to live in conformity with Christ but who face a culture very much at odds with the Gospel.

St. Faustina would agree. Remarking on the importance of *requiring* the sisters to speak to each other during their daily time of recreation, she said, **“Keeping silence when one ought to speak is an imperfection and sometimes even a sin.** And so, let all the sisters take part in recreation, and the superior should not dispense them from this except for a matter of great importance. Recreation is an opportunity to get to know each other.” (Diary, 553)

“A community atmosphere must allow for communication. That gives people the opportunity of psychological and emotional wholeness and responds to the human need to be integrated in a network of inclusiveness.” (Mother Benedict Duss in *Mother Benedict: Foundress of the Abbey of Regina Laudis*)

There is a time to talk and share, to reveal our stories and the way God has worked in our lives, to share our sorrows and struggles and dreams, to be encouraged and supported. To laugh and experience the warmth of human relationship is something for which we were created, and another way to experience the love of God.

But our relationship with Him sometimes requires all the screens to go dark and all the sounds silenced. **To put, in the words of St. John of the Cross, our house at rest. And to welcome, not just into our parlor but all the way into our secret cellars, the Source of all human relationship Himself.**