

Quarr Abbey Newsletter

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Autumn bloom in the cloister garden

Time for Silence

The night was certainly quiet when the shepherds were awoken by the Angels' song. There was probably not much talk as the Magi drew near to Bethlehem, joyfully looking at the star which guided them on the way. All was even quieter in the crib, regardless of the number of people present. Of Jesus, the new-born child, nobody spoke. It was enough to look at Him, to be with Him, and to experience the utter simplicity of His presence.

There are all sorts of silences. Some are terrible and cruel; some are void and meaningless; others are full of peace and acceptance. A few open us to something greater. They respond to a Presence which is transcendent, which no word can properly express. That very sort of silence waits for us at Christmas. It is a gift of Christmas, a present we should not overlook.

I hope we shall find time for this silence in the days around Christmas. Time and heart. Finding a heart that is ready to listen is not always easy. It is difficult to shut up all noise in our minds and all clamour in our hearts. Yes, some of them at least need to be listened to carefully. But others – I assume: the majority – can without any difficulty be put aside. You need a little courage and the clear conviction that it is good to keep silent, to stay quiet for a while, and to listen to another Voice. This Voice has much to tell us, but as the wise men of old, it chooses to begin with keeping quiet and saying nothing. The Word can be heard only by those who enter the Silence it comes from. There is a Silence in God, but also a deep and profound silence in nature – beyond the cries of the birds, the music of the sea, or the whispers of the wind. There is a deep silence in you, in me. We are not only words. We have not only words to say and words to exchange. We are a presence, a gift, which is given to ourselves and offered to others also in silence.

According to Ecclesiastes, there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl 3, 7). In us, as in God, things begin with silence. Christmas is a good time for this and Quarr is a good place. May you find time and heart for this silence during Christmastide. Be sure you will all be within the silence of our Community during the holy season of Christmas. **Fr Prior.**