

## The Counselor's Corner

Shhh.....

One of my favorite quotes is "A wise man [woman] once said.....**nothing**". What a novel idea at a time when we have an overwhelming desire to fill in all the blanks as fast as possible and get immediate answers and solutions. We crave the latest personal, local, and world news and are dependent on Facebook, texting, Snap chat, Twitter, and more. Being articulate is desirable, but clearly there are times when we need to stay silent.

When we are asked a question that we are not prepared to answer, a pregnant pause is warranted. It lets us think and prepare our responses. This is far more effective than quickly giving an answer that does not accurately represent our feelings. We have seen numerous examples in politics this year when pauses could have saved reputations. We need to use the pause when our children seem to be pressuring us for answers. When more time is needed than a pregnant pause, we need to table the matter, give it more thought, and answer it when the timing is right and everyone is calm. Otherwise, regret is the bell we are likely to toll.

Sometimes we say embarrassing or inappropriate things that may come back to haunt us. We choose to fill the silence with pointless babble and/or sarcasm instead of enjoying the quiet. In an article in the "The Jesuit Collaboration," there is a reference to people who were anxious when they found out they had to abstain from talking during a retreat. Once they experienced being nonverbal, their feelings were overwhelmingly positive. Participants were more relaxed and in touch with their inner selves, and the silence enabled them to communicate with God in a way they had never known. They recognized that "...silence is not the absence of something, rather, it is the presence of a different way of communicating. There is a whole lot that is going on in silence."

At funerals, we feel so bad that we want to pull out our best words to comfort the grieving. However, we often give ourselves too much credit when we believe we can do that. It is often best to say that we are sad (not sorry) to hear about the death. Those few words and perhaps a hug is all that is needed, especially if we do not know the deceased well. Sometimes we see people groping for words and fighting with the silence, resorting to trivial sayings that may not be comforting at all. We must realize that to **be** with our friend, family member, or colleague is what matters.

Using our tongues to annihilate another when we are angry is a bad choice. Sometimes, we do not know everything that goes on behind the scenes, yet we are willing to fight for what we *think* is right. Often, when we are patient, we will be enlightened about the circumstances that surround an event that has made us mad. Although there is much talk about young people putting their thoughts out there on the internet, older people do the same, vocalizing via email and on Facebook. Once we hit "send" or "post," there is no turning back. We may have shared very personal feelings without having all the facts. If we had just waited 24 hours, gotten more sleep, and/or had the opportunity to ask basic questions, the anger we felt the day before often will dissipate. When we jump to share it all, we can end up with much regret.

Let us strive to be comfortable with silence. Let us try to realize that (at times) it can be more appropriate than words.

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