



# LOURDES LEAFLET

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## SILENCE POINTS US TO REALITY

I'll never forget the silence of Sept. 11, 2001.

Most of us remember the chaos of that day—the sirens, the alarms, the confusion and pandemonium. The senses were assaulted—especially for those who were physically present in New York, Washington, D.C., or Pennsylvania.

But like many, I watched the events of Sept. 11 unfold on television from afar. I was still in Rome at the time, working for the Vatican Congregation for Bishops. I watched the Twin Towers begin to collapse on a television set, with other American priests assigned to Rome. All of us sat in stunned silence, helpless to do anything. What amazed me was that the television commentators also sat in silence. For long periods of time, the television displayed terrible images, with almost no sound, commentary or interruption. Everyone seemed to know that words were nearly useless in the face of something so unthinkable.

Silence amplified the magnitude of what we were watching.

I think I remember that silence so vividly because silence, especially on television, is a rare thing in contemporary culture. Rarely in the world do we encounter a silent moment. Media blares and, more than that, we are a people who talk a lot. In some ways, our culture seems uncomfortable with silence.

But I learned, on Sept. 11, 2001, the power of silence. A silent moment, in a loud, chaotic, confusing world, amplifies reality. In silence, without distraction, we see what is real—what is truly before us. We are given the time to better comprehend the true meaning of things.

This is the reason the Church calls for silence, and a great deal of silence, during the liturgy of the Mass. Silence amplifies the reality of what we experience. Silence is a proper response to a reality which words cannot express — in the case of the Mass, to the reality of God's presence.

We are invited to silence several times during the Mass. We are first of all called to be silent before Mass begins. We need that space of time to recollect ourselves in order to enter into prayer. This is why there should be no video presentations or even choir rehearsal during those five or 10 minutes before Mass begins.

We are then called to silence as we recall and repent of our sins. We are called to silent reflection after each Scriptural reading, and after the homily. We are all called to silence after we have received holy Communion. And we are invited, at the conclusion of Mass, to kneel down for a silent prayer of Thanksgiving before departing for the parking lot.

These periods of silence are intended to bring reality into focus. At Mass we express to God our contrition, we hear his word, and we receive his physical presence sacramentally. These realities go beyond our comprehension. To hear and understand the Word of God is an expression of his great love for us.

To receive the body of Christ is the deepest kind of communion with God. The silence in the liturgy punctuates a rich and profound time of prayer with opportunities to reflect on the reality of our experience. The silence of the liturgy is a gift which helps us to understand the greatest gifts we can receive.

In 2000, Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, offered an insight into the silence of the liturgy. "We respond, by singing and praying to the God who addresses us, but the greater mystery, surpassing all words, summons us to silence. It must, of course, be a silence with content, not just the absence of speech and action. We should expect the liturgy to give us a positive stillness that will restore us."

Pope Benedict described the liturgical silence as a "silence with content ... a positive stillness." He meant that our silence in prayer is not to be an emptying meditation alone. Instead, silence in prayer is an occasion to more deeply understand the Mass itself.

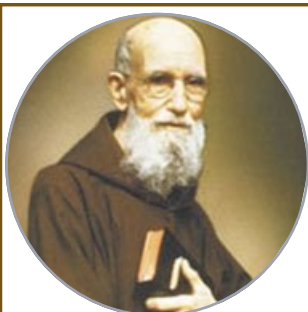
After the readings, for example, we can, in silence, picture the narrative of the Old Testament or the Gospel. If the readings contained advice, an exhortation, or an admonishment, we can ask the Lord how it applies in our lives. The period of silence is a time when the Lord can vivify—make alive—the word proclaimed. We need only to ask him for this, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."

After Communion, as we pray in silence, we can ask the Lord to fill us with his love—to help us love our brothers and sisters, to help us see the world as he does. We can give him thanks for the great blessings he has given us. After a while, our silent prayer after Communion may become an experience of simply being in the silent, radiant, loving presence of our God.

Silence isn't easy for any of us. The Church gives us silence in the liturgy to train our hearts and minds in silent prayer. But attentive, active, "positive silence" takes work. Often, we may find it difficult to focus. The Church encourages us to ask the Lord to help us to experience his presence. As we cultivate silence, we will begin, more frequently, to hear the voice of the Lord.

Silence points us to reality. It is a rare gift, but to understand it may take us each a lifetime. Let us give thanks for the silence of the liturgy. Let us ask the Lord to help us use it to see more clearly the reality of his magnificent and loving presence.

Source: [www.catholicnewsagency.com](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com)



Solanus Casey, OFM Cap.  
1870—1957

Who was Father Solanus? A simple man; a simple priest; not a man of letters although he sometimes wrote like a poet; not a man of degrees, yet his thought reached to profound depths.

In his own time, he was far ahead of his time. Like a prophet, he was a man with a message for our times. Like a prophet, he lived a life concerned for God's people, suffering and laboring for the conversion of sinners. His message, always one of faith and trust in God, was to console and to encourage. He brought about peace by a kindly insistence on our right relationship to — and

dependence on — God and neighbor.

This Capuchin priest, Father Solanus Casey, was born November 25, 1870 on a farm near Oak Grove, Wisconsin along the banks of the Mississippi. He was the sixth child in a family of ten boys and six girls born to Irish immigrant parents who left Ireland after the famine years, the scourge of the Emerald Isle. His Irish immigrant parents named him Bernard after his father.

His childhood was rich in love, steeped in Catholic tradition. The Casey family honored their Irish Catholic Faith above all else. Barney kept good memories of daily prayer with his family. Solanus often recalled his father calling them, "Prayer, boys, prayer!" It is no surprise that young Barney learned to love the rosary as his mother did and he vowed to say it every day, remaining faithful to this custom throughout his life.

## OUR GREATEST LIE

If you are a Catholic striving after sanctity, you make a sincere effort to avoid all mortal sin and even venial sin. You certainly value truthfulness as a basic requirement for living a vibrant spiritual life and never intentionally tell lies or deceive others. Yet even so, there is one lie I have learned that Catholics, even very pious, faithful Catholics, are guilty of telling. And they tell it time and time again, sometimes every day. We go on deceiving others with this lie, and then tell the same lie again, sometimes to the same people. Most likely it is not intentional; we do not set out to be untruthful - but we become untruthful nonetheless. And this untruthfulness is not harmless; it is an untruth that can do grave harm to our own spiritual life and deprives those we lie to of very necessary graces. If not rectified, this habitual lie can lead to a devastating habit of spiritual neglect. And yet, even then, even knowing this, we continue to do it.

Have you figured out what lie I am talking about, what untruth we habitually tell other people? Is it clear yet? What lie am I talking about?

"I'll pray for you."

We sign up for prayer chains with pious intentions, then neglect to actually offer the prayers we have committed to. Many of us have all but tuned out the "prayer intentions" section in our parish bulletin. When in hearing about others' problems and calamities, we often sympathize and say, "I'll pray for you," but then when we do our rosaries and holy hours we are consumed with our own troubles - that is, if we manage to keep our minds from wandering totally. Yes, "I'll pray for you" is probably the biggest lie we tell - surely the most well-intentioned lie, but an untruth nonetheless.

Sometimes we realize our neglect here. Sometimes, as we are going through our evening rosary, we remember how we took our friend's hand and assured them of our prayers. Pricked with remorse over failing to pray for them, we will often retroactively add our friend's "intention" to the rosary we are just wrapping up, or maybe say a few extra Hail Mary's on their behalf. Such efforts, though better than nothing, signify our spiritual laziness when it comes to praying for others.

The mightiest prayer warriors of our Faith were all great intercessors; they derived great spiritual benefit from pleading the causes of others, and their prayers were heard because of their great love. The great intercessors were not simply content to mention the names of their people before their rosaries; they deeply held the concerns of their people in their hearts, brought them lovingly before the Lord in rapt prayer, wept on their behalf before the altars, sometimes praying all night for them. St. Francis spent entire days fasting and praying for the brothers of his order; St. Monica wept and prayed for Augustine for years, and the heart of the great Doctor of the Church was softened for conversion by the tears of his mother's impassioned prayers.

When we pray for others, our prayers should be passionate. In this way we allow divine charity to bridge the gap between our own life and needs and those of others. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not" (2 Cor. 8:12). If we take the initiative to truly reach out to God on behalf of another, to cherish them and their problems in our heart and bring them before God in prayer, God will take up our prayers and transfigure our disposition through Divine Charity, helping us love beyond what we thought capable and rendering our prayers fruitful and beautiful.

Part of this is simply committing to actually taking the time to pray - really pray - for the people who entrust their intentions to us. How can we ensure this happens? One of the great intercessors of the modern church was Venerable Solanus Casey, the famous humble Capuchin friar of St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit. Ven. Solanus (d. 1957) was assigned the role of porter in the St. Bonaventure Monastery, a job which brought him into contact with all the troubled souls who came to the monastery seeking spiritual solace. After hearing their stories, he began noting their intentions in a small booklet, which he would take with him to adoration. He would use the book (shown above) with its many names and intentions as a guide to his prayers, moving lovingly down the list and praying intently for each person on it.

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As he did this over the years, he began to note that the prayers were being answered. This inspired Ven. Solanus to note not only the intentions in his book, but the dates they were answered. What great faith! Over the decades at St. Bonaventure Monastery, he cataloged thousands of prayers answered.

What if we were to adopt Ven. Solanus Casey's method? What if we were to carefully note the intentions people brought to us in a book, and keep this notebook among our treasured spiritual books we take with us to Adoration? What if we made a point to spend at least five minutes in impassioned, intentional and focused prayer on each intention in our book, going down the list? And how would our faith be strengthened and our souls edified if we were to also record the answers to these prayers, creating an ongoing chronicle of God's goodness in the lives of those around us?

"I'll pray for you." *Let us transform it from a platitude we say thoughtlessly to a core principle of our spiritual life.* source: <http://unamsanctamcatholicam.com>

### Solanus Casey, OFM, Cap (Continued from front)

In 1883, before turning 13, Barney spent a few weeks at St. Patrick's church in Hudson WI. During instruction for his First Holy Communion, Barney first felt the Spirit stir within him, eagerly loving the lessons and the Bible. Attending Midnight Mass one Christmas Eve, Barney secretly wondered whether he could be a priest. This stirring continued to grow until the age of 21 when he entered St. Francis High School Seminary in Milwaukee to study for the diocesan priesthood.

Solanus' first assignment at Sacred Heart in Yonkers NY caused his pastor to question how a "simplex priest" might fit in. Solanus first served as sacristan, then director of the altar servers, then porter or "doorkeeper," answering the bell at the monastery door. These were minor jobs for rookie friars, but Fr. Solanus took great pride in it. How could it be demeaning to care for the church and the altar? His intense devotion to the Eucharist was fostered in the hours before the Blessed Sacrament.

It was at the monastery door, though, where Fr. Solanus became a much-loved and sought-after counselor. Eventually, visitors came and asked for Fr. Solanus. Sick people sought his blessing and remarkable cures began to take place.

One of the keynotes of Fr. Solanus' spirituality might be an Attitude of Gratitude which he called "the first sign of a thinking, rational creature." The prayer of "Thanks be to God" poured continually from his lips. "Love for God and neighbor" is another recurring theme of his writings along with obedience, trust, humility, and patience.

Very early in his religious life he formed the practice of writing simple resolutions as reminders to guide him on the way of perfection. In the novitiate he began writing these resolutions in a little notebook which today is preserved among his own writings. A very important little writing that we find there is the following list of five points:

#### **Means for Acquiring the Love of God:**

1. Detachment of oneself from earthly affections. Singleness of purpose.
2. Meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ.
3. Uniformity with the Divine Will.
4. Mental Prayer - meditation and contemplation.
5. Prayer - "Ask and it shall be given to you."

After this he noted:

#### **TO PRESERVE GOD'S PRESENCE:**

1. Raise your heart to Him by frequent aspirations.
2. Make a good intention at the beginning of each week and frequently during its execution.

All these simple admonitions form a very worthy program to help one advance along the way of holiness. We can be sure that Fr. Solanus found them to be a reliable guide on his way to perfection. If one could take just a few of these points and follow them through perseveringly, one would surely grow in love for God, be able to live in His presence, and overcome all that could keep us from our true destiny, eternal life and happiness with God.

Read more about this Venerable man of God at [www.solanusc Casey.org](http://www.solanusc Casey.org)