

FAITH IN THE WORLD-16

The echoes in silence.

Near Peterborough lives an incredible woman. Her name is Rachel and she lives alone. That doesn't sound too unusual, but Rachel is what is known as an Anchorite. In medieval times, anchorites chose to be walled up into a room with three windows; one that looked into the church, so they could participate in services, one where people could come and receive their wisdom and prayers, and another where a maid could attend to the needs of the anchoress.

Thankfully Rachel is NOT walled up, but she does live a life of silence, solitude and prayer, as well as offering her wisdom, prayer and insight to those who request her help.

Sister Rachel, as she is known, joined a religious community shortly after qualifying in medicine, and then left to live a solitary life. She says that silence is essential to prayer, but that silence refers to far more than a cessation of noise around and about and is so more than just not speaking. She feels that in the silence she will hear God's prompting in her life. She feels that silence also helps her to reflect more deeply on the mystery of God, "a mystery for which we simply have no words" she says.

TO REFLECT ON

Jamie recognised that God enabled him to be the best version of himself, as a father, a husband, and a son. That realisation for Jamie came in silence before God. Now, Jamie uses silence as an opportunity for growth. He's committed to 20 mins of silence a day to read the whole Bible in a year to continue that growth and learn more about God. How could you create a daily moment of silence to:

- reflect and get closer to God
- become a better version of yourself,
- listen to the wisdom of the world and others around you?
- pray for more people to come to know Jesus.



"Thy Kingdom Come"

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement which invites all Christians to pray between Ascension day and the day of Pentecost, for more people to come to know Jesus Christ.

You are invited to join in with this and you can add your pledge to pray here:

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/lightuptheworld>

We all pray in different ways, but this focuses upon silence.



WATCH

In the video at the bottom of this paragraph, Jamie Jones-Buchanan shares his thoughts on the importance of silence. For Jamie, silence was needed as a rugby player to listen to his teammates and to hear guidance from his coach. Rugby stadiums in silence give Jamie time to reflect on the memories he has had playing, and the lessons he's learnt on the way. Jamie learns more about God by taking 20 minutes out of his day to read the Bible in silence.

<https://youtu.be/v7ttNpCLz3I>

SILENCE IN SCRIPTURE

In Mark Chapter 1, we find that Jesus seeking out the restorative power of silent prayer and solitude.

32 "That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed."



#PLEDGE2PRAY

TO PRAY

Take yourself to your favourite silent spot in your house or garden. Take this prayer with you and say it to yourself. Take a moment to breathe and sit in silence to think about what it means for you.

Father God, I thank you for the gift of silence and how I can grow closer to you in the quiet. I pray that you would help me to create moments of silence and stillness in my everyday life, using them to reflect on you, and to deepen my experience and knowledge of you.

TO REFLECT UPON

During the first lock down many people commented upon the sounds of nature that could be heard when our towns were silent.

- Thinking back to last year, what did you notice?
- How easy do you find silence when there are phones, TV's and ipads craving our attention?
- Do you find silence helpful or difficult?

Mark 6 describes another situation where Jesus wanted to withdraw from the crowds.

"30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat."

In what physical way might the place of solitude have helped the apostles and Jesus?



AIDAN'S PRAYER "Leave me alone with God as much as may be. As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore, make me an island, set apart, alone with You, God, holy to You. Then, with the turning of the tide, prepare me to carry your presence to the busy world beyond, the world that rushes in on me,



HOLY ISLAND

People throughout the ages have sought desolate places to find the divine in the solitude. In 635AD Saint Aidan went from the isle of Iona and chose to found his monastery on the island of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island. From there the Christian message flourished throughout the world. The natural world, consisting of puffins, seals and dolphins is very near at hand here.

The rhythms of the tide coming in and going out several times a day, means that the island is only accessible for short periods of time, as the road is covered by the sea. Such rhythms in nature gave rise to the rhythms of activity and rest, of busyness and quiet, of work and prayer in monastic communities.

- How might we benefit from this ancient wisdom?
- What difference might it make to our lives?