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Topic #1

In the Old Testament we read that there is “a time to keep silence and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). What is the value of silence and quiet time in a time when we are always “plugged in”?

We live in a noisy world! Cell phones, TV, Facebook, YouTube, and video games – we’re always plugged in, and hardly get a moment of silence.

Besides the constant influx of stimuli, our minds are constantly fed a stream of hi-def surround sound media. The scary part is what little control we have over what we are exposed to. Profanity in music, promiscuity on television, and violence in games pollute our minds and souls. The Church Fathers have a word for these stimuli: “λογισμοι.” These distracting images and thoughts steal our attention and turn us away from God.

We can all relate to being in church trying to pray when our minds wander off. Which teams are playing in the basketball game, what condition the church walls are in, and the delicious fellowship hour donuts.

And while it is impossible to stop our minds from wandering, it is our responsibility to turn away from the harmful inputs that keep us from focusing on our Lord and our salvation.

Nikephoros the Monk advises us to “be aware of the outside influences of the devil as he and his demons try to derail our thoughts. The only defense against this, he says, is the ceaseless mindfulness of God.”

The Old and New Testament are full of people gaining wisdom when they go to silent places. Prophets and Saints went into deserts and up mountains to isolate themselves from the distractions of this world. A clear example of this is Psalm 46:10’s instruction to “Be still and know that I am God.”

Furthermore, The Cherubic Hymn encourages us to “lay aside all earthly cares; that we may receive the King of all.” Even Jesus spent time alone away from His disciples to pray and be in communion His Father.

The idea of stillness and silence “ησυχια” permeate the teachings of our faith, but in this age of noise and distraction, stillness and silence don’t come easy. It takes commitment and regular effort. Going to a quiet place and spending time alone unplugged from the world is a great way to begin, as God often chooses to reveal Himself in these silent moments. Here we will begin to develop a high-speed connection with Him.

If we don’t take the time to cultivate silence and feel the presence of God, we give the distractions of this world dominion over us. Consciously paying attention to the presence of God instead of the nearest source of distraction will give us the courage to do His Will and to find the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven. St. Isaac of Syria said, “What watering is to plants is exactly the same as what silence is for the growth of spiritual knowledge.”

Stillness is a choice! So the next time you are on the bus, eating your breakfast or even walking to your next class, put down your ear buds, quiet the λογισμοι, and be still. Be still and in that stillness find the power and peace in hearing God.