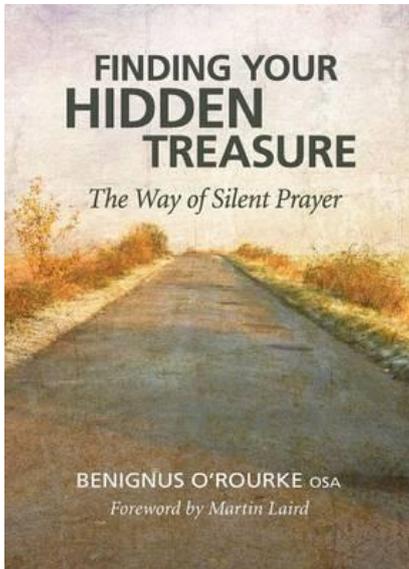


FINDING YOUR HIDDEN TREASURE - by Benignus O'Rourke

BENIGNUS O'ROURKE (1929-2019) was an Augustinian friar and a member of the Community at Clare Priory in Suffolk, who led hundreds of men and women, people of all faiths and none, on the way of silent prayer for more than forty years.

Chapter 9 – Be still and know: Discovering God in silence



Waiting for God in silence, being still so that God may reveal his presence, is part of the teaching of the Scriptures.

In Lamentations we read: *'It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord ... It is good to sit alone in silence'* (**Lamentations 3:26-28**). And in 1 Kings we find the story of the prophet Elijah who, in a most unexpected way, found God in the silence. Elijah is fleeing for his life. He takes refuge in a cave on Mount Horeb but is called to stand outside the cave because God is to pass by.

'Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And

after the fire came a gentle whisper.' *When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave, and God spoke to him* (**1 Kings 19:11-13**).

The Psalms sing in many places of discovering God in silence. In **Psalms 62** we read *'For God alone my soul waits in silence.'* And in the King James version of the Psalms, we come across this lovely advice: *'Commune with the Lord upon your bed in silence and be still'* (**Psalms 4**). Best-known of all is the line from **Psalms 46**, *'Be still and know that I am God.'* This is the invitation and the promise to which Augustine constantly returned all his life.

In the New Testament we read that Jesus loved to spend time alone with his Father. Early in the morning he would take himself off to the hills to pray. Sometimes he would spend the whole night in prayer. Luke's Gospel tells us: *'His fame spread more and more, and many people came to listen to him in order that he should heal them of their illnesses. But he often withdrew to lonely places to pray'* (**Luke 5:16**).

And when Jesus comes to visit Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, at Bethany we find that the only thing Mary wants to do is to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to him. When she shows no sign of coming to help Martha with the supper, Martha complains to Jesus. He gently defends her sister. *'Martha, Martha,' Jesus says. 'You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her.'*

The tradition grew quickly in the early Church that sitting in silence and stillness, that 'better part', led the way to inner peace, the way of experiencing the mystery of God.

We need only remember the Apostle Paul's words in his letter written to the Christian community in Rome shortly after Christ's death: *'The Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words'* (**Romans 8:26-27**).

Paul's words were echoed by Augustine, who tells us: *'When we pray, we have no need of spoken word. Sometimes the tongue is silent, and the soul is sighing. That means that God is being prayed to inside, in the room of your heart.'*