Monday of Holy Week

SILENCE

"When you feel the assaults of passion and anger, then is the time to be silent as Jesus was silent in the midst of His ignominies and sufferings. O holy silence, rich in great virtues! O holy silence, which is a key of gold, keeping in safety the great treasure of holy virtues!" - St. Paul of the Cross

ST RITA OF CASCIA

From an early age St. Rita desired to become a nun, but her parents insisted that she marry at the age of twelve. St. Rita did so in obedience to them. Adding to her disappointment, the man her parents arranged for her to marry was cruel and harsh, and she spent 18 years in a very difficult marriage. She would not react to his anger with her own anger but met it with silence. At first she expressed a passive-aggressive anger through her silence. Her silence was at first its own way of controlling her husband in response to the way he sought to control her through angry outbursts. In time, God taught her to express silence in the virtuous sense. Even when her husband eventually became physically abusive, she met his cruelty with kindness and patience. Two sons were born to her whom she loved deeply. After many years she eventually won her husband over to greater civility and kindness. She had broken her silence and expressed love to him even when he expressed wrath to her. It was her patient expression of continual love that eventually quenched the deep fire of his wrath.

Rita's husband was murdered as a result of a rivalry that existed in that time. St. Rita mourned her husband's death and interceded for his soul with great earnest. Her two young sons, in keeping with the vice of the day, talked of avenging their father's death. St. Rita did all she could to guide her children into forgiveness, but was unable to dissuade them from their evil intentions. Prayer was her only hope. She prayed that God would change the evil swelling up in the hearts of her sons, or allow them to die before they fell to wrath. God heard her prayer and her sons died before falling into wrath and vengeance.

The deadly sin of wrath can express itself in silence in the passive aggressive sense. We can seek to exert control at times by saying nothing and using that as a means to get others to say what we want. We need to learn to keep silence in the virtuous sense where we do not express outward wrath or inward wrath. To use silence in the virtuous sense is to be patient with others and with ourselves. Virtuous silence is waiting until we can hear God speak to us and then we speak in kindness what we have heard. How have you used silence to control instead of practicing virtuous listening, waiting for God to speak?

For your prayer

St. Rita would have prayed with John 12:1-11. Use your imagination as you slowly read John 12:1-11. Please reflect on how Jesus never used silence to control and always spoke after listening to God the Father. Reflect on how you can practice silence not to betray God through inward wrath but to hear God in a way that leads to kindness.