

silence in the city

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4 YHWH

Instill your silence
in my heart, O Lord,
despite the distractions
of the world.

6/21/01

I

I sit in the parking lot
of a Laundromat on Summit Avenue;
door ajar to let in air on this summer's day,

I read my Morning Prayer.

Carts and cars wheel past,

but there is

silence in the city

6/22(a)

In the middle of the night

I pray

and read the Scriptures for the day.

A siren cries out.

It pierces

but cannot overcome the

silence in the city

6/22(b)

Coming home from a busy morning
and early afternoon,
I recline on the couch for a short recess...
The wind blowing through the trees,
as cars race up and down the street,
speaks of the
silence in the city

After sunset
as I sit with crucifix in right hand
and rosary in left,
breathing out the Sorrowful Mysteries
in the presence of God,
a bird sings
as people talk aloud across the street...

And at sunrise
the birds' song returns—
a sign of the
silence in the city

6/23(b)

Early on this Saturday morning
as I pray the Resurrection of our Lord,
His lit crucifix before my eyes,
the rain begins to fall
on the tar and the concrete.
As it lands upon the roof
I hear the
silence in the city

6/23(c)

Sitting in the car at the cemetery,
near my sister's grave
on this the anniversary of her death
(and birth into heaven),
the rain pours down onto my windshield
from the dark sky—
but I have only light inside,
and I am reminded that there is

silence in the city

6/23(d)

And at my sister's grave,
the flowers of the miniature rose bush—
which blooms but once a year—
are dead now:
only empty buds remaining.
But there are a few petals, too,
and their pinkish color is reflected wonderfully
in the orange-spotted, soaked marble
of her headstone.
Could anything be more radiant?
Yes, there is a
silence in the city

As I begin to transcribe these entries

under a single cover,

a promising rookie

hits his first major league home run.

The crowd shouts in jubilation;

through it all I maintain

silence in the city

It is early Sunday morning,
just before dawn,
and there is but a ticking clock I hear
as I turn to my Office of Readings.

Now is the time
the stillness is most known.

Now one need not search
to find the

silence in the city

II

Yes, and as closer I draw to the 2:00 hour

the Lord calls me to wake and pray,

as His discipline I found

more firmly in my soul,

ever more clearly

do I hear the

silence in the city

(speaking volumes in my heart)

6/25(b)

At apparition time in Medugorje
(on this the twentieth anniversary),
I am kneading a meat loaf in the kitchen.

I think to kneel,
but there the Spirit rushes upon me.
I still my hands and listen for her voice.
All the sounds continue from the streets

and from the trees—

but all I hear in them

and far above them

is the

silence in the city

(the light of God shines)

6/27(a)

As I return to the chair
in which I pray and write,
here in the middle of the night,
I perceive a certain light there;
and I am shown quite clearly
(as the bird pauses her song)
that there indeed is a

silence in the city
(the city is of God)

6/27(b)

As the sun sets
and I breathe out the Sorrowful Mysteries
in my last hour,
outside my window the saw of construction
whirs on
and a hammer pounds nails.
I keep vigil for the
silence in the city
(by street light I write this)

“Caliente,”
says the only other soul
in the small basement chapel
where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.
She leaves out the door.
It is summer, and it is hot...
but here is palpable
the

silence in the city
(and I am in ecstasy)

It is perfectly still.

The city sleeps.

As the sun rises,

all is silent.

Why have you any doubt

that there is

silence in the city

(can you not hear

do you not listen)

7/1(b)

In the roar of the motors,
in the din of the streets...

it does not leave us,

the

silence in the city

(it cannot be taken away)

7/1(c)

Breathing at the heart
of all humanity
is this

silence in the city
(it is the voice of God)

III

Despite the impending rain,
the fireworks continually explode
as night falls.

They grow closer, louder,
but I am in stillness, in prayer,
and the scourging I do not feel.

In each explosion I hear the

silence in the city

Just a drop of His blood is needed

to heal our tortured souls.

Just a word from His mouth

falling upon our ears

brings us the

silence in the city

Reading Evening Prayer,
at the moment a horn sounds several times
outside my window
I think of a hermitage in the deep woods
where I have known profound retreat...
there is the same
silence in the city

Yes, even here
where the cars move
in almost constant flow
either direction along their river
before the house in which I sit...
even here where music plays
and dogs bark,
birds sing and sirens blare...
even here I can taste the

silence in the city

Deep in my soul
the silence flows;
it brings tears to my eyes, its light—
and in the pauses in the sounds
of slamming doors and revving engines,
here amidst the cacophony
of airplanes rumbling and babies crying...
as the sparrows stand still a moment
and the pigeons leave off their moaning...
it explodes, the
silence in the city

7/11(a)

As a bus flies past
and a plane rumbles in the sky,
I sit in the Lord's sanctuary,
before His Blessed Sacrament;
and the page I pause in reading
is blown over
by the wind through an open door...
there is
silence in the city

7/11(b)

There is a wondrous silence
which rises from the throne of God,
which speaks of His majesty—
and the fans spinning overhead
in this holy temple
do not distract from His Presence
upon the altar,
but, with the children's voices
from the courtyard,
tend now to magnify the
silence in the city

It makes me huddle in the corner—
more terrifying than the thunder
and the lightning
and the earth quaking or the wind howling
is the “still, small voice”...
wherein God becomes so real,
so palpable,
wherein I hear so clearly the
silence in the city

7/14(a)

It is morning.
As I lie still,
having now completed
the Glorious Mysteries,
the silence rises
as I invite Jesus
to make His home
in my heart...
Here I find the
silence in the city

7/14(b)

As I pray with rosary in hand,
the wind whistling as it strikes my ears,
a hush is upon all that moves.
Traveling along these sidewalks,
I listen for the
silence in the city

7/14(c)

In the midst of the Divine Mercy Chaplet,
recited with my brothers and sisters
while kneeling before the Tabernacle
after daily Mass,
my tongue becomes still—
for it has hit me, the
silence in the city

7/14(d)

And lying here in front of the Blessed Sacrament,

alone,

a fly buzzes about ... even in this is the

silence in the city

IV

The flapping of the bird's wing
is followed immediately by the roar
of a rushing bus,
but both are subsumed by the
silence in the city

Window open,
I continue my quiet strumming
and singing
as the raucous garbage truck
gradually crashes and crunches its way up,
then down,
this two-way street...
there is nothing that can overcome the
silence in the city

Only the clock is ticking.

An occasional car passes by...

It is the dead of night.

The clock is ticking,

I am praying

in the

silence in the city

I wander through the City.
A white dove disappears over a skyscraper.
Distractions constantly surround me.
Though the weight of it all bears down
upon my neck and shoulders,
I hold onto the

silence in the city

7/25(a)

What a grinding noise
the air conditioner in this old church
makes;
it could spin one's soul out of place.

But I have Jesus
inside
and before me now,
so I do not lose touch with the

silence in the city

7/25(b)

And now the grinding becomes as a holy noise,

like the flapping of angels' wings...

all sound sings His praise

when founded in the

silence in the city

7/25(c)

Walking the crowded streets
of Midtown Manhattan
at rush hour,
I can't tell you how comfortable I felt,
how fully I realized the
silence in the city

I received Communion today.

In the responses at Mass,

I found my place at the Lord's table.

Again,

a special fulfillment of the

silence in the city

The music of the ice cream truck
echoes through these streets
after sunset in summer.

It rings out its song,
speaking of the promise held
in the

silence in the city

V

On the wall of the parking garage

is perched a turtledove.

Here is a sign of the

silence in the city

8/1(b)

This plaintive cooing is our own,

a call from the

silence in the city

What stillness comes from the throne of God

and fills the land of glory,

His holy Church.

It rests upon all souls who seek the

silence in the city

I hear the wind blow
a few leaves
lightly along the surface of the sidewalk...
A gate opens, and closes.
I am reminded of the
silence in the city

The voice of the Blessed Mother

is like a gentle cloud.

It surrounds me

with the

silence in the city

And in the middle of the night
when I lie back down to rest
after eating the bread of the Lord's Word
in His Holy Scripture,
I am held in His gentle arms.
I have within me the
silence in the city

8/11(a)

In the Church of St. Francis
in the middle of Manhattan,
I confess my sins
and sit now before Jesus
exposed in the Blessed Sacrament.
The bridegroom of my soul is here
in the
silence in the city

8/11(b)

The subway, the Path train,
races through the tunnel
under the Hudson River;
it roars along the tracks,
but I am sitting still in the

silence in the city

I lean my chin upon folded arms
and look out at the reddish air of sunset
as rain falls lightly upon the trees
and cars in the street below.
A few people walk by.
There is something of the speaking of the
silence in the city

VI

The world is a sad place,
a lonely place, I think.

The thunder in the distance
evokes no fear or wonder.

Yet there is hope, I believe,
that we will come out of our cocoons
and hear the clarion sound of the

silence in the city

(it waits for us)

The stillness
at the center
is what guides us
through
the surrounding circumstances;
it is the

silence in the city
(and it beats in our hearts
and breathes in our lungs)

8/15(b)

Yes, the noisy air conditioner
brings the sound of angels' wings,
and I am mystically transported unto heaven
as I sit on the floor before the Lord's Presence.

I am entering into the

silence in the city

(and finding it so near)

When we receive the Sacrament,

when we eat His Body

and drink His Blood,

within us is the

silence in the city

(and grow as yeast it does)

On the boardwalk of Seaside Heights,
the timeless land
of my childhood memories and dreams...
the ocean's waves breaking to my right,
the amusements and a world of people
left and before and behind...
I eat a slice of pizza
and walk in the
silence in the city
(the oneness of life and mankind upon me)

Reflections I see in windows and the rearview mirror,
of clouds in the sky
and an empty bottle on the sidewalk,
as I sit alone in my car
across from an abortion clinic on a Sunday morning
and pray the Joyful Mysteries in the
silence in the city
(peace shall descend upon us)

Outside the walls of this church
a jackhammer drills the concrete,
but I don't hear it,
rapt as I am
before the Sacrament on the altar
in the
silence in the city
(here peace reigns)

8/23(a)

A single cricket's song
in the middle of the night
returns me to the

silence in the city
(and I pray again)

8/23(b)

The stone cross against the morning sky,

the

silence in the city

(reigns over us all)

As I complete the fourteenth (and final)
station of the cross
at the wake of my long-time pastor,
the church becomes still, quiet.
(Only a moment before,
the voices had been chattering quite freely...)
The soul rises in this
silence in the city
(and touches our hearts)

As the sun rises,
the wind through the trees
speaks with God's voice,
for it comes from the

silence in the city
(and remains)

A soaring bird
in the clear blue morning sky...

silence in the city
(and in our souls)

8/29(a)

The WORD of God, His NAME

“YHWH”

is

the

silence in the city

(it speaks in all sound)

8/29(b)

Today in church
there is but a light mechanical whir
from the ceiling fan...
yet it is enough to call one to the

silence in the city
(and make it real)

Entering the park,
sunlight on the yellow-green tree and grass,
suddenly

silence in the city
(now)

As I close my morning prayers

the birds are singing,

the clock is ticking,

the light is shining...

and I am with Jesus in the

silence in the city

(and there I shall stay)

9/5(a)

Coming into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament,
my tongue is stilled...

silence in the city
(is upon me)

9/5(b)

T
he
flame
of the candle
burns beside the altar;
I hear its flickering light...

silence in the city
(is moving
here)

VII

Oh what blessing when the tongue is stilled,
when we enter the eternal presence
of our Lord and God,
known in this
silence in the city

At prayer or in the shower,

suddenly

I am quiet,

suddenly

His voice is speaking;

suddenly,

slowly...

silence in the city

9/11(a)

Standing on the grass
in a park across the river
from a mile-wide cloud of smoke
(three hours earlier two hundred-story buildings
were razed in terrorist plane attacks),
I imagine myself in the shoes of the thousands dead
and pray—
and still

silence in the city

9/11(b)

And though I weep
and though I cry out,
there remains,
I tell you

silence in the city

9/11(c)

This you must know,
this you must see—
nothing shall overcome the light,
nothing shall disturb the
silence in the city

9/11(d)

In the heart it rests,
at the center of all it stands;
nothing is apart from the

silence in the city

9/11(e)

“Their axes have battered the wood of its doors.

They have struck with hatchet and pickaxe.”

They have crucified the Lord,

but they cannot touch

the

silence in the city

9/11(f)

Jets now roar past overhead.

Sirens do blare.

But listen, if you will,

for that which is eternal—

hear the

silence in the city

9/11(g)

The Lords' three boys
gather at the house;
father and mother come together on the porch...
all in fear for the virgin daughter,
hoping she is safe from the attack of the world.

May in the LORD's arms

we all rest,

in the peace

of the

silence in the city

I Am...

...a mystical poet and philosopher, living, as it were, the life of a monk, whose purpose is to serve as the hub of the wheel, the still point upon which the world turns, hidden and secret, and yet without which the wheel would spin out of place.

The life of the monk is the life of prayer. Prayer, the work of the spirit, is that which sustains life. It is the air we breathe. And though it is invisible, though it cannot be grasped by the hand of man, it serves as life's very essence.

And the word is the tool of prayer, the tool of the monk, the poet, the mystic philosopher. And the word is of God, who is the Word, the Spirit, the source of all life, and all

words. With the word the poet speaks, and forms the heart of the universe, the central axis upon which the world spins.

So, though often overlooked and, when viewed, seen as insignificant, if not worthless, the function of the monk is indispensable; it is absolutely integral to the continuation of life, to existence itself.

