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**SILENCE AND
THE AUDIBILITY OF THE WORD:
CONTEMPLATIVE LISTENING AS A FUNDAMENTAL
ACT OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION
PART 3: CHRIST REVEALS MAN TO HIMSELF ON
CALVARY***

Having explained the anthropological dimension of listening as the person’s ontological readiness to hear the Word in part one,¹ and, having argued that this obedient readiness is founded theologically in the Son as eternal Listener in part two,² the concrete interplay of these dimensions is the focus of part three entitled, “Christ Reveals Man to Himself on Calvary.” By assuming a human nature, the Son unites the anthropological and theological dimensions of listening in himself.

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¹ See J. Marianne Siegmund, “Silence and the Audibility of the Word: Contemplative Listening as a Fundamental Act of the New Evangelization. Part 1: An Anthropology of Listening,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 6, no. 4 (2017): 585–607.

² See J. Marianne Siegmund, “Silence and the Audibility of the Word: Contemplative Listening as a Fundamental Act of the New Evangelization. Part 2: Jesus Christ, the Eternal Listener,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 1 (2018): 119–137.

Calvary is the moment when the Son is most a Listener, for his death expresses the supreme word of the Father's love.

While Christ's personhood is the model for man's listening presence in the world, the perfect reflection of Christ is seen only in Mary, for it is through her motherhood, that she embodies the personhood of Christ both physically and spiritually. On account of her sinlessness and virginal purity, the personhood of Christ is resplendent in Mary, who is the archetype of Christological listening. At the foot of the Cross, Mary fully becomes who she is: a Christological listener who listens most obediently to the will of the Father in her Son's own listening.

This article consists of three parts.

First, one needs to understand Calvary as the extreme form of the Son's self-receptive listening. Indeed, Calvary has a prominence in the Son's eternal listening, for here, by his silent, consenting obedience to the will of the Father, he receives himself as an outpouring of the Father's love.³ The paradox, then, is that the Son is "most" Word when he is "most" silent, at the moment of his own death.⁴

³ Sacred Scripture supports the idea that one may speak of the Son as an outpouring of the Father's love, which outpouring "happens" in the Love who is the Holy Spirit. A few examples of such passages include the following: Is. 53:10–12; Jn. 3:16, 19:34; Rom. 5:5; Phil. 2:6–8. By analogy, Christ is the spring of water that gushes forth to refresh his people. See Ps. 104:10 and Ps. 105:41 in conjunction with Jn. 4:14 and 1 Cor. 10:4.

⁴ That the Son is most Word when he is most silent may be understood literally as Christ's natural inability to speak after he dies. It is fitting, however, that the moment of his death is preceded by his "sixth word" from the Cross: "It is finished [τετελεσται]" (Jn. 19:30). These words are most appropriate to the oncoming, final silence of death for two reasons. First, as the culmination of one's life, the moment of death "summarizes" one's life by making permanent one's final dispositions. In the life of Christ, his last words show at a glance his entire life of obedient listening to the will of the Father and it now comes to its temporal conclusion. But second, the words of Jesus are most appropriate to his silence because they mark his full, earthly reception from the Father of all that he is—the whole of his human life—as one shall see in this third part.

Second, Mary's listening is the paragon of human nature fulfilled by grace. By her acceptance of Christ's obedience to the Father—and by her own consent to the Father's will—at the foot of the Cross Mary participates in her Son's extreme form of listening. Through her silent gesture, Mary communicates her listening by enfolding each person within her own Christological listening. But further, Mary's communication on Calvary involves a two-fold dimension. (1) First, in her listening she embodies the silence of the Word in his death, when he is most Word. (2) Second, Mary communicates by drawing the human person into that embodiment. She is the concrete place where the person's ontological listening is fulfilled in its uncreated archetype precisely because she draws the person into her own silent embodiment of listening. The mother of Jesus participates in the listening of her Son such that she reveals and communicates the eternal Word just as she did when she first received him in her womb.

Third, in my conclusion, I not only discuss the conventional idea of evangelization, but also indicate how my interpretation of the *new* evangelization privileges silence as the audibility of Christ's presence in the world. The fundamental act of the new evangelization is to make Christ audible to the world through one's own contemplative listening. But, the highest form of such audibility is the person's silent embodiment of the Word when he is most Word: in the silence of his death on the Cross. Because the human person embodies Christ's silence, he "speaks" most about Christ when he is most silent.⁵ To maintain that

⁵ Patterned on the archetype of the eternal Listener, the human person becomes "most silent" in his listening to Christ on Calvary. Here, he grasps that, as the summation of one's life, the moment of death—at least in the case of Jesus Christ—is a reflection of his whole life. As Schonborn teaches, "life is revealed in dying," which is "why the *ars bene moriendi* [art of dying well] consists in the *ars bene vivendi* [art of living well]." But further, the death of Christ "is so living that, even in death, he is still communicable" in the grace he offers mankind. Christoph Schonborn, *From Death to Life: The Christian Journey*, trans. Brian McNeil, C.R.V. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 185; Adrienne von Speyr, *John*, Vol. 4: *The*

Christological audibility is the silent embodiment of Christological listening is to make a claim about evangelization that goes contrary to the conventional understanding. While contemporary society and many religious denominations hold that evangelization is *primarily* verbal preaching about Christ, I assert that it is, in fact, *primarily* a Mariological stance, which characterizes the *new* evangelization as embodying the eloquent silence of the Word. Thus, while the new evangelization also necessarily entails preaching, prior to any verbal expression or other form of communication is the person's initial mode of *being* obedient silence as a Mariological listener in the eternal Listener of the Son. Listening is not just an event that occurs prior to anything else with which evangelization is concerned; rather, listening is the entire ethos of the new evangelization itself. As a reality that is always present, listening gives shape and character to everything that the new evangelization entails.

The Son's Self-Receptive Listening on Calvary

The truth of the event at the foot of the Cross reveals itself as the place where, in its archetypal form with the mother of Jesus, man's Christological listening occurs. This section of the article will show why Calvary is the place where the Son's self-reception as Word happens in his moment of supreme silence. I shall show that Calvary is the extreme "economic" form of the Son listening to the Word that he is. The significance of the Son being the extreme form of listening silence at the moment of his death highlights the paradox: he is most eloquent as Word at his death because his silence most fully expresses the Father's love.

Birth of the Church: Meditations on John 18-21, trans. David Kipp (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 140.

Calvary is the extreme form of the Son's eternal listening because it makes audible the will and the love of the Father. The death of Jesus manifests both his complete and total obedience to the Father and his eagerness to love, which passionately consumes Him: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished."⁶ Christ's obedient consent unto death in accord with the Father's will—which is entirely his own will⁷—is the extreme "economic" form of his eternal listening because his death is the moment when the Word becomes silent (in death) to reveal the fullness of the Father's love. In the silence of death, the truth of the Word's eternal sonship shines most brilliantly as he "becomes," then, most Word.⁸ Indeed, the obedience of the Word made flesh reaches its climax in dying, as his final human act of surrender to the will of the Father.⁹

The Son's self-reception means that he receives the divine will simultaneously with his divine nature as an obedient readiness to the form of his own existence, which he consents to as his own. As the Word of the Father, the Son is his readiness to manifest the Father, for he does whatever is needed for the Father's will and love to be spoken.

⁶ Lk. 12:50.

⁷ Christ's human will is always in accord with the divine will of the Godhead. One notes a manifestation of this harmony as Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42). See also: Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36.

⁸ Always receiving himself from the Father, death is the climatic moment when the Son fully returns the gift of himself to the Father. This does not imply, of course, that the Son ever "withheld" anything—as God or as man—but, because his whole earthly existence reaches completion at the moment of death, it concludes his human, earthly disposition of obedience. On Calvary, then, the whole life of Christ, offered to the Father, is not only "all" he *can* give, but it is also "all" that he *needs* to give.

⁹ That the Son goes out "to meet" death of his own accord is an emphatic statement of his will regarding it. "Death was not coming to him; it was he who was going to it." Fulton J. Sheen, *Life of Christ* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1958), 407; Fulton J. Sheen, *The Cross and the Beatitudes* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1937), 105.

But further, the very manner in which the Son comes from the Father as obedient readiness is the transcendent, “hypostatic” foundation of the human obeying of Jesus. Christ’s human obedience is the attitude of the eternal Son.

Now, by his death, Jesus “extends” this obedient attitude to its maximum. Calvary is, in fact, the temporal focus of the Son’s eternal listening because, in silent obedience, he consents to the Father’s will and “in return” receives himself as an outpouring of the Father’s love. Calvary is the temporal focus of the eternal listening because the Father is speaking the Son—as a Word of love—into the world for its redemption; his death reveals the love of God, who “gave his only Son” for man’s redemption.¹⁰ Because the Son uses human listening to “extend” his divine listening, there is a human aptitude for this listening; this human aptitude is precisely a willingness to die for the beloved.¹¹

Man’s Temporal Dimension of Christological Listening Abides in Mariological Listening

The Son is the paradigm of listening for the human person because he is the eternal Word who listens to the Word he is. Thus, even though the human person, as a word in the Word, embodies listening in his very structure, listening is also first found in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. But, on account of her sinlessness, it is Mary who reflects Christological listening most perfectly. Thus, I now turn to Mary and her role as listener at the foot of the Cross.

On Calvary, Mary has a dual role. In her relation to Christ, she embodies the temporal model of Christological listening because she most perfectly receives herself in obedient love for the Father’s will. In

¹⁰ Jn. 3:16.

¹¹ Jn. 15:13.

her relation to the human person, she is the archetype of Christological listening because she is sinless from the first moment of her conception.

The two dimensions of Mary's role at Calvary are interrelated. Based upon her Immaculate Conception, Mary represents humanity concretely as a listener fulfilled by God's grace through her listening to the Son's eternal listening.¹² Because she is *gratia plena*, Mary is, in fact, the ultimate realization of human nature perfected by God's grace.¹³ Since she has the highest grace—being immaculately conceived—she has the highest perfection of human nature. By the same token, because the double reality of Mary's human nature perfected by grace is simultaneous in her Immaculate Conception, it is paradigmatic for the rest of mankind. Having received the fullness of grace, Mary is the perfect human person. But further, Mary's singularity of nature fulfilled by grace is not only a gift for herself, but also, it is a gift for mankind, who is able to claim her as a mother. That Mary is the archetype of human nature fulfilled by grace is a reality that is always present.¹⁴

To speak of Mary as the paradigmatic "first" of human nature fulfilled by grace means that she "co-generates" redeemed humanity with Christ. Free from all sin yet fully human, Mary co-generates redeemed humanity with Christ by her sinless participation in her Son's

¹² The Council teaches that in Mary, one sees already fulfilled all that one is striving to become. "Dum autem Ecclesia in Beatissima Virgine ad perfectionem iam pertingit, qua sine macula et ruga existit (cf. Eph. 5, 27), christifideles adhuc nituntur, ut devincentes peccatum in sanctitate crescant [While however, in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already attained that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27), the Christian faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness]." *Lumen Gentium*, #65, in *Sacrosanctum Oecumenicum Concilium Vaticanum II: Constitutiones Decreta Declarationes* (Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993).

¹³ Lk. 1:28.

¹⁴ In Sacred Scripture, Mary is described as the "glory of Jerusalem . . . the joy of Israel . . . [and] the honor of the people." Jdt. 15:10, in *The Holy Bible* (Douay Rheims Version. Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1989).

redemptive mission. Indeed, both Jesus and Mary co-generate redeemed humanity as listener on Calvary through the birth of the Church. Christ, the new Adam,¹⁵ pours forth the Church from his pierced side and Mary is a model of the Church¹⁶ as well as her most exemplary member.¹⁷ Just as “the first woman was made from the side of a sleeping man,” so also a new bride, the Church—of which Mary is mother—is formed from the side of Christ at his death on the Cross.¹⁸ Because the Church flows from side of Christ at death, she is born on Calvary; her mother is also present not only *as* her mother, but also *as* her most perfect member.¹⁹ Thus, I must next speak of Mary’s dual co-generative role at the foot of the Cross.

¹⁵ St. Paul compares Christ and Adam, especially in chapter five of his Letter to the Romans. The English translation of this chapter (verse fourteen), speaks of Adam as a “*type* of the one who was to come.” The Latin word, however, is simply *figura*, meaning figure, which varies from the multiple connotations that the word *typus* offers (type, figure, image, character, form). The Greek word, *τυπος*, adds to my discussion the following meanings: “pattern, example, model, or standard.” Created in the state of grace, Adam is the first man who “images” or is “patterned upon” Jesus Christ, the new Adam, who restores fallen mankind to union with the Father through his blood.

¹⁶ “*Deipara est Ecclesiae typus, ut iam docebat S. Ambrosius, in ordine scilicet fidei, caritatis et perfectae cum Christo unionis* [The Mother of God is a type of the Church as St. Ambrose taught, namely in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ].” S. Ambrosius, *Expos. Lc. II, 7*: PL 15, 1555, cit. after *Lumen Gentium*, #63.

¹⁷ If Mary were not a member of the Church, “one could not speak with full correctness of the Church’s motherhood.” Schonborn, *From Death to Life*, 98.

¹⁸ “*Propter hoc prima mulier facta est de viri latere dormientis; et hic secundus Adam inclinato capite in cruce dormivit, ut inde formaretur ei conjux per id quod de latere dormientis effluxit* [For this reason, the first woman was made from the side of a sleeping man, and here the second Adam sleeps with head bent upon a Cross, so that from there a bride might be formed for him through that which flowed from the side of the sleeping one].” Augustinus (tract. 120) in Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, “*Super Joannis Evangelium, Cap. XIX, 10*,” in *Catena Aurea in Quatuor Evangelia* (Parmae: Typis Petri Fiaccadori, 1860).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The following quotation from Louis Bouyer's book, *The Church*, expresses Mary's dual role as both mother of the Church and as her most exemplary member.

*The Church's motherhood is something that already exists in reality only because the Church has found here her anticipated perfection: the highest created holiness in a unique communication with Christ's own holiness, who communicates it to her who is not only the mother of us all, but is first of all his own mother.*²⁰

In her relation to Christ, then, Mary cooperates with him as the bride and mother who co-generates in redeemed humanity the fullness of nature and grace; but, she acts also as the most exemplary member of the Church, having been already redeemed by Christ at the moment of her conception. In her relation to the rest of mankind, then, Mary is the sinless woman—the mother—who co-generates redeemed humanity in responsive listening. Indeed, Mary is at the core of the Church as bride and mother, and as her most exalted member.

To speak of Mary as co-generating the person in adoption implies that she is the first adopted child of the Father, through her Son, Jesus. Given the main topic of this article, Mary's maternal co-generation needs to be described in the specific terms of obedient readiness, listening and silence. Mary receives adoption, then, first because she is obedient readiness—in the Son's readiness—to the Father's will, which is characterized by her lifelong "Yes." Therefore, Mary is the first to receive herself on Calvary as a child, in the one eternal Child of the eternal Father, drawn, as she is, into the Son's own silent, obedient readiness to the will of the Father. On account of her preeminent filial adoption, then, Mary is a co-generator with Christ by her own listening to the Word and by her participation in that listening.

²⁰ Bouyer, *Die Kirche*, 406, cit. after Schonborn, *From Death to Life*, 98.

Mary's "Yes" displays an attitude of listening to the Word, which results in the fruitful generation of filial adoption. But, she receives, or co-generates adoption as a woman, so she is both a bride and a mother.

I now focus upon Mary's role as a co-generator with Christ in the work of configuring the person as a listening son in the eternal Listener-Son. This task involves two considerations. First, Mary's co-generation concerns her *listening* to the Word. Second, having been drawn into the listening of Jesus, her co-generation involves her *participation* in the listening that the Word is. But further, her participation in the listening of Jesus is her silent communication of him to the human person. Indeed, such co-generation indicates that Mary is not a distant model of listening for the person; rather, she is intimately united to each person as both a mother in the order of grace and as an archetype of Christological listening. She "mothers" the human person as listener by letting him share in her listening. And, Mary's listening is a spousal listening; indeed, it is her "Yes" to Christ.

Granted that Mary co-generates the person as listener with Jesus by her participation in his obedient listening, how may one explain that participation in terms of listening? By her preeminent human "Yes" to the Father, which inheres in her Son's "Yes," one may speak of Mary's participation as listening because of her filial adoption in Christological listening obedience. Her co-generation of the human person as a Christological listener in her own listening is a participation in her sinless listening to Christ. But, given that Mary's "Yes" is a participation in Christological listening, how does Mary communicate that listening to the human person? First, Mary communicates Christological listening to the human person by embodying Christological silence in a paradigmatic way. But second, Mary lets the person share in her own embodiment of Christological listening. She does so precisely because she is the paradigm of humanity, as I have shown above. Because Mary is the

sinless human person, she includes each person in her own listening. Therefore, Mariological listening is, at its core, not only intrinsically open to God, but also, it is intrinsically open to each human person.

Conclusion: The Evangelizer's Mariological Listening

The human person is constituted as a Christological listener in Mary's own participatory listening on Calvary. However, to claim that listening so constitutes the human person is to make a radical claim about evangelization, which is contrary to the conventional view. The conventional understanding of evangelization emphasizes oral preaching and teaching as the main thrust of its work. One sees an abundance of evidence that the vocal transmission of Christ's Gospel message is given priority in the countless seminars, conferences, training programs and other forms of oral communication pertinent to "evangelization." It is as if the more programs one *has*, the more evangelization one *does*. In fact, such programs are even thought to be the whole of evangelization itself. This conventional view of evangelization seems to neglect its most important factor: the embodied presence of Christ as *the* Message to be proclaimed.²¹ While the conventional understanding of evangelization analyzes and speaks about Christ quite extensively in the third person, Christ needs to be brought to the fore through the human person's contemplative listening. One cannot reduce evangelization to mere proclamation precisely because the very being of the human person—as Mariological listener in Christ—must echo the eternal Listener.

²¹ Recent Church teaching has spoken of the emphasis placed upon Christ as the one taught. In addition to Pope John Paul II's *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2002), #14, see also the following additional selection of sources: Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1975), #6–12; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), #852; John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1979), #5–9; John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1994), #42.

Dialogical liberalism operates in a manner somewhat contrary to the conventional understanding of evangelization. With its stress on tolerance, dialogical liberalism presents a rising discomfort in the culture concerning preaching itself. Rather than one person's verbal proclamation of a set of truths, dialogical liberalism propounds group discussions, shared learning and tolerance for the beliefs and convictions of all.

By contrast, the person who embodies Christological listening, however, offers a presence to the world in the form of patience. This presence of silent patience is not what the liberals understand as tolerance. Rather, the presence that listening offers encompasses the mystery of the truth of the human person himself. The person *is* a Christological listener before he performs any action.

My understanding of evangelization gives Christ the priority—not by the multiplication of words *about* Him, but by the audibility of the Word he *is*. If the Son, who is the “first-born of all creation,” *is* obedient listening, then, if the new evangelization is even to exist, Christ must be made audible through the person's silent radiation of him; man is either “the hearer of the Word, or he is nothing.”²²

Of course, the new evangelization also necessarily entails the oral preaching and teaching of the Word. Yet, silence occupies a privileged place because it is the matrix of speech and it pervades speech. The silence, which is even more fundamental to evangelization than the verbal teaching, is the silence of the person who becomes an icon of what is proclaimed: Jesus Christ. The person makes Christ audible in *his* silence, where he is most Word. And, Christ is most Word on Calvary, at the moment of his obedient listening in death, in the culmina-

²² Col. 1:15; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 196.

tion of his readiness to do the Father's will. His death embodies the truth of his existence as Son.

When the person makes Christ audible by his own Mariological listening, he not only witnesses to him, but he also witnesses to the manner in which Christ reveals man to himself. The person embodies a Christocentric revelation of man as listener. However, being a Christological listener is not just a matter of supernatural grace, but also it is the fulfillment of the ontological nature of the person as listener. The person is fulfilled not only as one who *verbally* proclaims he is a silent listener, but also insofar as he *embodies* that proclamation by his very existence. In other words, the fundamental act of the new evangelization is *being* the "new" anthropology signified by the Christological revelation of human nature as silent listener. Christ becomes audible to the world, then, when the person becomes who Christ desires him to be.

The key to the new evangelization, then, is nothing other than discovering and consenting to the truth of one's being as a participated revelation in Mariological listening. And, to embody the silence of the Word in Mariological listening is to be fulfilled in one's human nature by grace. Therefore, the primary act of the new evangelization is to *be* the truth one proclaims—Mariological listener in Christ—prior to and accompanying any verbal teaching that evangelization necessarily entails. Thus, the evangelizer *shows* Christ to others—as Christ shows us the Father—and that is the core of the new evangelization, which may be described as contemplating the face of Christ.²³

If the person's listening does not embody this fundamental Mariological stance, he does not evangelize. But, one who is a Mariological listener makes Christ *audible* by making him *visible*; he makes Christ visible by filial listening. The heart of the new evangelization, then, lies

²³ Jn. 14:8–11; John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2001), #15–16.

in the person becoming a Christological listener: the “act whereby one participates in the Son’s obedience,” which I have called filial adoption through Mariological listening, “involves man’s genuine transformation [and] is also the only really effective contribution toward renewing and transforming society and the world as a whole.”²⁴ Since Mary’s listening is Christological, it renews society precisely because by it, the human person acts in accord with his nature. Indeed, it is precisely the novelty of Christ’s presence in the world as an act of listening that makes the evangelization *new* in the ontologically rich sense of Mariological listening.

To be a person is to radiate the person of Christ, thus making him concretely audible to the world through one’s own Mariological listening. But, since the very act of contemplative listening, which is the inner character of man receiving himself, is what makes Christ audible to the world, it is the fundamental act of the new evangelization as the embodiment of the truth one proclaims. Calvary is the event that makes Christ audible to the world because here the human person embodies Mariological listening as the truth of his being a Christological listener, for such has Christ revealed the person to be. Hence, the evangelizer embodies the word as silent, Mariological listener so that when he does speak, his words resound the Incarnate Son, who reveals the Father’s love.



²⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 93.

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PART 3: CHRIST REVEALS MAN TO HIMSELF ON CALVARY**

SUMMARY

In the third part of her arguing for contemplative listening as a fundamental act of the new evangelization, the author shows that the concrete place where the anthropological and theological dimensions of listening converge is at the foot of the Cross. Man discovers the truth of his being as silent listener in his encounter with Christ by standing with Mary under the Cross, which is the place where, with her, he participates most fully in Christ's eternal being as Listener; as such, he becomes a participated revelation of that act, thus making Christ audible to the world in what thereby becomes the basic exercise of the new evangelization.

KEYWORDS

Jesus Christ, listening, silence, Mary, Mother of God, new evangelization, contemplation, Calvary, Christology, Mariology.

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