



**MALTI**

## **Is-Silenzju Franġiskan bħala Faqar fl-Għarfien**

– fehim Franġiskan tas-silenzju, mqabbel  
mal-viżjoni Benedittina u Karmelitana

Fit-tradizzjoni Franġiskana, is-silenzju normalment ma jiġix ipprezentat bħala teknika li trid titgħallem jew stadju li wiehed irid jilhaq. Jidher aktar bħala t-tiżiħ naturali tat-talb meta l-imħabba ma tibqax teħtieġ ħafna kliem. Fil-ħajja ta' Francis of Assisi, is-silenzju ma jiġix spjegat – jiġi mgħix. Franġisku spiss kien jirtira f'postijiet kwieti, mhux biex jipprattika metodu, imma biex ikun ma' Alla. Id-dokumenti bikrin jgħidu li kien jgħaddi milli jgħid talbiet biex jasal li jsir hu stess it-talb. Dan juri b'mod ċar preżenza kontemplattiva.

Dan it-talb aktar profund u kwiet jidher b'mod aktar ċar fil-figuri Franġiskani li għexu aktar tard. Clare of Assisi (Santa Klara) titkellem dwar li tħares, tikkontempla, u tħares lejn Kristu. Is-sejħa tagħha tista' tinstema' f'kliem bħal dan: *Iffissa ħarstek fuq Kristu. Oqghod miegħu f'kontemplazzjoni ta' mħabba. Ara lilek innifsek rifless fih, u żommu f'attenzjoni mimlija mħabba.* Dan il-lingwaġġ juri talb li mexxa lil hinn mill-kliem u l-ħsieb, u sar attenzjoni mimlija mħabba.

San Bonaventura ta' Bagnoregio jgħallem li r-ruħ trid tħalli warajha xbihat u ideat u tidhol

f'dlam fejn Alla ma jintgħarafx bil-ħsieb, imma bl-imħabba. Fit-tradizzjoni Franġiskana, dan it-tħalli mhux suċċess jew kisba spiritwali, imma umiltà – kunsens għall-assenza ta' għarfien.

Il-Franġiskani ma organizzawx il-Lectio Divina b'mod formali bħalma għamlu l-Benedittini aktar tard, imma l-għarfien profund tagħhom tas-Salmi u tal-Vangelu kien spiss iwassal b'mod naturali għas-skiet. L-aħħar moviment tal-Lectio Divina, li kultant jissejjaħ Contemplatio, ma jitqiesx bħala pass obligatorju. Jiġri meta l-Kelma tkun daħlet tant fil-fond li tinbidel fi skiet. It-talb apofatiku – talb lil hinn mill-kliem u l-ideat – jikber minn din is-sempliċità, mhux bħala xi ħaġa miżjuda minn barra.

Għall-Franġiskani, is-silenzju jaqbel b'mod naturali mas-sejħa għall-umiltà u l-minorità. Li wiehed jaċċetta li ma jafx ifisser li jċedi l-kontroll u l-kburija spiritwali. Is-silenzju mhuwiex ħila li turi, imma tip ta' faqar – li tkun vojta biżżejjed biex tircievi. Għalhekk is-silenzju Franġiskan dejjem ikun marbut mal-imħabba u mal-ħajja fid-dinja. Mhux ħarba, imma disponibbiltà.

Fit-tradizzjoni Karmelitana, is-silenzju u t-talb lil hinn mill-kliem jiġu spjegati b'mod aktar ċar u dirett. L-għalliema Karmelitani jikkellmu dwar mixja fid-dlam u fin-nuqqas ta' għarfien lejn għaqda ma' Alla. Is-silenzju jiġi mgħallem u mmexxi bħala parti minn triq magħrufa. Meta mqabbel ma' dan, il-mod Franġiskan hu inqas strutturat. Jasal għall-istess fond, imma mingħajr

mappa dettaljata.

Fit-tradizzjoni Benedittina, is-silenzju jservi s-smiġh u l-istabbiltà. Is-silenzju jgħin biex wieħed jisma' l-Iskrittura, lill-komunità, u jzomm fedeltà ta' kuljum. Il-Lectio Divina hi strutturata b'mod ċar, u s-silenzju hu l-frott kwiet ta' smiġh twil u paċenzjuż. Meta mqabbel mal-ħajja Franġiskana, is-silenzju Benedittin hu aktar regolat u komunitarju. L-attitudni Franġiskana hija aktar flessibbli, timxi inqas f'linja dritta, imma m'hijiex inqas serja.

Meta narawh b'din il-perspettiva, is-silenzju u t-talb lil hinn mill-kliem jagħmlu parti shiħa mit-tradizzjoni Franġiskana, sakemm jiġu offruti bħala ftuh u mhux bħala kisba. Is-silenzju jsir Franġiskan, biex ngħidu hekk, meta jingħex bħala umiltà, fiduċja, u mħabba. Jistenna fis-skiet sakemm il-kliem jaqa' – u mbaġhad is-skiet jibqa'. —□



## ENGLISH

### Silence as Franciscan Poverty of Knowing

– a Franciscan understanding of silence,  
with Benedictine and Carmelite comparisons

In the Franciscan tradition, silence is not usually presented as a technique to be learnt or a stage to be mastered. Instead, it appears as a natural deepening of prayer when love no longer needs many words. In the life of Francis of Assisi, silence is lived rather than explained. Francis often withdrew to quiet places, not to practise a method, but simply to be with God. Early sources say that he moved beyond saying prayers into becoming prayer itself. This points clearly toward contemplative presence.

This deeper, quieter prayer becomes clearer in later Franciscan figures. Clare of Assisi speaks of gazing, looking, and contemplating Christ. Her invitation can be heard in words such as: *Fix your eyes on Christ. Stay with him in loving contemplation. See yourself reflected in him, and hold him in attentive love.* This language suggests a prayer that has moved beyond words and thoughts into attentive presence.

St Bonaventure teaches that the soul must let go of images and ideas and enter a kind of darkness where God is known not by thinking, but by love. What matters in the Franciscan tradition is that this letting go is understood as

humility – a willing not-knowing – rather than a spiritual achievement.

Franciscans did not organise *Lectio Divina* in a formal way, as Benedictines later did, but their deep familiarity with the Psalms and the Gospel often led naturally into silence. The final movement or station of *Lectio Divina*, sometimes called *Contemplatio*, is not treated as a required step. It happens when the Word has been received deeply enough to fall silent. Apophatic prayer, prayer beyond words and ideas, grows from this simplicity rather than being added from outside.



For Franciscans, silence fits naturally with their call to humility and minority. To accept not knowing is to let go of control and spiritual pride. Silence is not a skill to be shown, but a form of poverty – being empty enough to receive. This is why Franciscan silence is always linked to love and to life in the world. It is, of course, not escape, but readiness.

In the Carmelite tradition, silence and prayer beyond words are described much more clearly and directly. Carmelite teachers speak of a journey through darkness and unknowing toward union with God. Silence is carefully explained and guided as part of a recognisable path. Compared with this, the Franciscan way is less structured; it reaches the same depth, but without the same detailed map.

In the Benedictine tradition, silence serves listening and stability. Silence supports attention to Scripture, community, and daily faithfulness. *Lectio Divina* is clearly shaped, and silence is the quiet fruit of long, patient listening. Compared with Franciscan life, Benedictine silence is more regulated and communal. The Franciscan approach is more flexible and wandering, but no less serious.

Seen in this light, silence and prayer beyond words belong fully within the Franciscan tradition, as long as they are offered as openness rather than achievement. Silence becomes Franciscan, so to speak, when it is lived as humility, trust, and love. It waits quietly until words fall away – and then it remains.

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