Blog
Social Justice



Statues of St. Benedict and his sister, St. Scholastica, above the entrance of the Church of the Annunciation, also called "St. Gabriel Church," in Prague (Wikimedia Commons/ŠJů)



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St. Scholastica is remembered for a simple request. After a day of visiting and speaking to God with her twin brother, Benedict, as they did each year, it was time for him to go. Scholastica asked him to stay. Benedict refused, as monastic rule required him to return to his monastery.

Scholastica did not argue. Instead, she prayed and a storm rose suddenly, making it impossible for him to leave. Benedict protested, saying: "Sister, what have you done?"

She replied: "I asked, and God listened."

These days, I have been thinking of that moment. What intrigues me is not the storm that prevented Benedict from leaving, but Scholastica's courage. As someone who struggles with making her needs known, I admire the bravery to ask for what mattered to her. Scholastica understood something I am still learning: that time is fragile and that silence can sometimes let time slip away.

The Rule of Benedict teaches restraint of speech. In Chapter 6, Benedict writes, "Even good words are to be left unsaid." I do not believe Benedict is primarily concerned with suppressing speech, but with forming it. Too much talk disperses attention; silence gathers it. Benedict wants the monk to learn how to listen — to God, to others and to the movements of his own heart.

In Benedictine life, restraint of speech is not the same as avoidance. Benedictine silence is meant to purify speech. Silence trains the monk to recognize when words are coming from ego or restlessness, and when they come from one's responsibility to speak out. We don't talk just because we can. There are moments when silence deepens communion. And there are moments when silence becomes a refusal to love.

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We are living in such a moment now. In a political and ecclesial climate marked by abuse, fear and the suffering of vulnerable communities, I often wonder why some people choose to speak out while others choose to remain silent.

As a woman of color, it can feel safer to remain quiet, to wait and trust that others will make their voices heard. And yet, I also feel that not speaking out corrodes my interior life more than any poorly chosen words can. After the latest death in Minnesota, I cannot allow my silence to protect me at the expense of truth, because it no longer serves conversion.

St. Gregory tells us that when Scholastica died, Benedict saw her soul go up to heaven in the form of a dove. Whether we read this literally or symbolically, it points to something we know to be true: Love, once spoken and received, does not disappear. It lives on in the hearts of those that remain.

Alex Pretti's last words were to a woman at a protest, "Are you OK?" I want those words to remain with me.

Scholastica's gift to Benedict was not the storm that allowed him extra time with her, but the lesson he learned. "She loved more." He learned that some moments ask for words, and that refusing to speak can sometimes be a failure of love.

Can the same thing be said of us?

In a time when many of us choose silence as neutrality, Scholastica invites us to a deeper discernment. Not everything requires speaking out, but the wisdom lies in recognizing when remaining silent is no longer a choice — and when love, and attention to the fragility of time, must find its voice.

"Are you OK?" Are we, as a nation, OK? Are we failing to love?

This story appears in the **Immigration Protests in Minneapolis** feature series. View the full series.