

BY JIM MERRITT
Special to Newsday

From moments of silence observed at public events to the vows of silence taken in monastic life, quiet can be a powerful spiritual practice. Silence in solitude can add to the experience of seeking God. This week's clergy discuss what is revealed to them without a word being spoken.

Jamaal Bernard

Author of "Unapologetic Christianity: Bold Living in a Chaotic World", and senior pastor, Christian Cultural Center's Long Island Campus, Hauppauge

Psalms 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." What we believe, especially, as Christians, is that silence, as well as solitude, is an area used to strengthen spiritual life. It gives people a chance to ponder where they are currently, what they are doing and what they have become. Silence gives time to reflect because where one is currently, today, one doesn't want to be tomorrow. It is a time of reflection that leads toward growth. However, nondenominational Christians don't believe that silence and isolation are synonymous. They can find silence in a crowded room, through meditation, and through prayer. At Christian Cultural Center, we believe that growth happens in community, not in isolation. We go on retreats and, there, find ourselves taking time to reflect. In essence, what we want to get our people to realize is that you don't have to have a major withdrawal from your community to go to a place of solitude and silence. That said, it is good, at times, to find a place to go for a quiet walk in the woods or on the



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ASKING THE CLERGY

How can silence and solitude deepen faith?

beach, to meditate and pray, and to see God in his creation. Seeing God through his creation helps if in doubt about the existence of God.

Rabbi Marc A. Gruber

Central Synagogue-Beth Emeth, Rockville Centre

Twice a day, Jews declare, "Shema — Listen, Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One." (Deuteronomy 6:4) Hearing is not listening. Hearing can be passive; listening is active. The Shema calls us to stop talking, stop moving, stop trying, just listen. Thus we begin to witness God's presence in our world. When we are alone and silent, we are often able to listen with a

When we are alone and still, we are better able to focus our attention toward God. When we tell our story to the Eternal One, we must be truthful in every way. Doing this can help us experience the oneness of all creation reflecting the oneness of God.

Erik Larson

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Faith is to believe things will be as they could be, again. A faith tradition provides guidance and direction on how to live to attain that. As we discover the truth in our lives — of what is right and wrong, kind and hurtful, good and less good — we obtain knowledge and can lead a life full of spirit. Silence allows us to see clearer the truths that resonate with the self. As we hold those thoughts of truth, we can move into the experience of our own truth and reconnect to the feelings of the innate self. The qualities of love, peace and joy often reveal themselves then. The silence of Raja yoga meditation shared by the Brahma Kumaris is to see ourselves as spirits, souls, children of God, who is our mother/father/friend and remember what pure love can be. We do not discover those feelings, but we've had them before and just allow ourselves to remember. We carry those feelings within us, and a sweet solitude will allow that eternal relationship and eternal self to be felt again — not just thought of or believed in. I am an eternal being of peace. There is a place for me beyond this physical world. There is someone in my life who loves me unconditionally. These thoughts, transformed into experience with silence, give us spiritual power and allow us to live as we can be. My faith becomes deep and unshakable.