

The Texts of the Convivium

THE MAN INCAPABLE OF LISTENING ALREADY KNOWS EVERYTHING

Let's imagine you suddenly think about telling a funny joke. However there's always a "smart Alec" in every group of friends, who immediately interrupts you saying he already knows it. He therefore takes away the pleasure of telling the end of the joke. A kind of small theft of other people's space and a small, venial, lack of charity.

In the Belle Èpoque, when my father was a young cavalry officer, people used to say: "When someone tells a joke the infantry officer laughs three times: when he hears it told, when they explain it to him and when he understands it. The cavalry officer laughs twice because he doesn't understand it ... (Let's skip over other armed forces that I don't remember). And what about the staff officer? He doesn't laugh: he already knows the joke, because he knows everything".

How many talk pompously about love and are incapable of even slightly listening.

Everyone wants to talk about themselves, as much as possible in fact, at the cost of doing violence to you. If what they are saying isn't enough to enthral you, they stretch out their arms as if to create two little fences, so that you remain stuck in the middle, in a little corner, to be eaten alive.

One has to understand that at the psychic root of such much loquacity there could be desperate loneliness, where talking nonsense, or talking too much, becomes an automatism with an end in itself.

Listening is a charity, whose practise is not always amusing. But those who have a sense of humour can find delight everywhere and make even the most tiresome situation pleasant, revealing its comical aspects.