
WORD MADE FLESH

Deus Absconditus*

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1,4-8; I Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37

Advent. It greets us in so many ways: in Isaiah's recognition and heart cry for the Presence, in the Apostle's measured gratitude for the gifts of the Spirit in the community of faithful, and in the Gospel's call to be awake, attentive to the return of the "master of the house."

Advent. A time of fasting, attending to the emptiness.

Advent. A time of preparation in gratitude for the gifts of the spirit that bless our life.

Advent. A time of honing the skills of anticipation.

Isaiah, in today's reading, is in the depth of such preparation. He cries out of emptiness, out of the heart's sense of the distance, the absence of the Divine from our presence. "Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down...." It is the Prophet's cry and our cry in those seasons of life when "all that integrity of ours is like filthy clothing." In those moments, those seasons "we have all withered like leaves and our sins blew us away like the wind." We are unable even to invoke "your name [oh giver of Divine Presence] or rouse ourselves to catch hold of you."

Advent. Fasting. Attending to the emptiness. "And yet, Lord, you are our Father; we the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hands."

Advent, a time of preparation in gratitude for the graces that have "enriched us in so many ways." Gratitude for all those who speak, "teachers and preachers", witnesses to the Divine Presence, while we wait in anticipation of its return. Advent, a time of gratitude because, like Isaiah and the Apostle Paul, we, too, have been called of God and joined to Jesus Christ, joined to the fullness Advent foreshadows.

Advent, a time of honing the skills of anticipation, honing them "in the bleak midwinter" of our life.

"Be on your guard, stay awake," Jesus says to his disciples, to you and me, "because you never know when the time will come." You never know when the time, when Advent, will be fulfilled. This is not some strange call to anticipate apocalyptic events, the end of history. Rather, it is the summons to our being, to the emptiness we hear in Isaiah's cry, the cry of the human heart. It is a summons to attend to the nativity, the birth of Divine love, given so freely, seemingly whimsically, in the midst of our life together. So the Gospel summons us to hone our anticipation, in the advent season of our life, to "stay awake", awake to the

birth of Divine love in the world, "because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn."

In the advent season of our life we simply do not know when the Presence will return.

So with the Psalmist we pray that we may come again to the birth of Life and "call upon your name" in whose Presence the mountains of our estrangement wither.

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