

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

2nd Sunday of Advent | For Sunday, December 9th, 2018

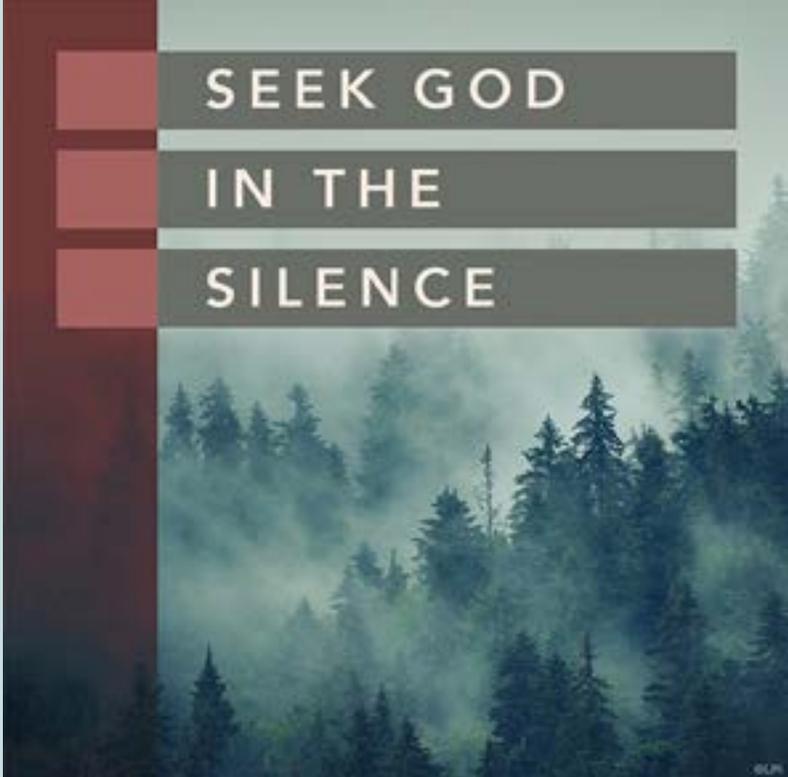
Advent: A Season of Discernment

Written by Br. Silas Henderson, S.D.S.

Baruch 5:1-9

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6



SEEK GOD
IN THE
SILENCE

We live in an age of hashtags, sound bites, and blogs and in a world of competing viewpoints and clamoring voices. It can sometimes be difficult to discern what is really worthy of our attention. This is especially true in days when partisan politics dominates our newsfeeds, and we try to make sense of senseless acts of violence and terror on so many fronts. It's easy to place blame, make excuses, and dig into our ideological trenches, all too often losing sight of the many goods — and lives — that are sacrificed on the altars of partisanship and policy.

There is a real danger in all of this: if we settle for the mediocrity of sound bites and half-truths, without seeking to discern what is truly important, we run the risk of losing sight of the hopes and promises that can only find fulfillment in a life committed to Christ.

While we may not often think of it in this way, Advent is a season of discernment. We're reminded of this in the second reading for this Sunday as we hear St. Paul's words to the Philippians: "This is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (Phil 1:9-10).

Building on this theme, the words of the prophet Baruch and the clarion call of John the Baptist that we hear this Sunday remind us of what it is we are called to be and do. The Baptist's cry to "prepare the way for the Lord" is a charge to discern the Lord's voice calling out to us in the midst of the noise and clamor that fills our daily lives and to persevere in the way of faith. This truth prompted the priest Origen to ask: "Is it not a way within ourselves that we have to prepare for the Lord? Is it not a straight and level highway in our hearts that we are

to make ready? Surely this is the way by which the Word of God enters ... Prepare a way for the Lord by living a good life and guard that way by good works. Let the Word of God move in you unhindered and give you a knowledge of his coming and of his mysteries.”

Hearing the voice of the Lord in the distance demands action, but this isn't only an invitation to turn away from personal choices and sins that may limit or even prevent God's coming among us. John is also calling us to turn toward God's mercy. And this turning — conversion — isn't only about what we give up, it is really about accepting the gift that we are being offered. This is why [Pope Francis has reflected](#), “Let us ask ourselves: is it true that in the various situations and circumstances of life, we have within us the same feelings that Jesus has? Is it true that we feel as Christ feels ... We must always convert and have the sentiments that Jesus had.”

In the liturgy for this Second Sunday of Advent, we are being reminded that these days of Advent demand our attention and intentionality. It is only by seeking the stillness and quiet — leaving behind the hashtags and sound bites — that we can discern the distant voice of the Coming One who brings the mercy and peace which our world so desperately needs.

Br. Silas Henderson, S.D.S.

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PRAYER

May the splendor of your glory dawn in our hearts,
we pray, almighty God,
that all shadows of the night may be scattered
and we may be shown to be children of light
by the advent of your Only Begotten Son.

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

— from *The Roman Missal*
(Collect for Saturday of the Second Week of Advent)