

Reflection for 2nd Sunday of Advent Year B

This week, we learnt that a vaccine will soon be available to treat coronavirus and for many people, a light is beginning to shine at the end of the tunnel. Reactions from the public appear to have varied: some have greeted it with an enthusiastic response while others have given it a more cautious muted response. In many respects, to have heard otherwise would have been surprising. The next few weeks and months are without a doubt going to present new challenges to both governments and the medical world as they try and roll out a successful vaccination programme. It is a time of a new dawn as the country tries to come to terms with the impact of Coronavirus and how we might move forward for the better.

The main figure on 2nd Sunday of Advent is John the Baptist, the voice crying in the wilderness. Over recent months, many people may have experienced a wilderness of faith, an emptiness as they have struggled to make sense of the pandemic. These unprecedented days in history have found that many people have try to be engaged with their faith in a different way while still trying to stay with it. At the same time, many are worried about how many people may return to Church, once there is the “new normal” and what it might look like. The landscape of church going will probably be a different reality. We should, however, wait and see if it turns out to be a good picture or one that will need some work to enhance it. Regardless, it can still present in an appropriate and credible way the freshness of the message of the gospel in these unknown days. The voice from the wilderness is inviting us to take courageous and bold steps into the unknown. It is, truly, a leap of faith, one which many of us would never have thought that we would have to face. Our Advent faith has taken on a new meaning as it cries from the wilderness. It places itself within the context of our own daily lives, entangled as they may be at this time of uncertainties and insecurities. From the wilderness, the Baptist cried “prepare a way for the Lord make his path straight” (Mark 1:2) Today, this is our Advent cry of faith from the wilderness. May these words from Alfred Delp a, German Jesuit who was put to death in 1945 in a prison in Berlin help us on our adventure of faith to Bethlehem:



“The man crying in the wilderness.” We live in an age that has every right to consider itself no wilderness. But woe to any age in which the voice crying in the wilderness can no longer be heard because of the noises of everyday life drown it – or restrictions forbid it – or it is lost in the hurry and turmoil of “progress” – or simply stifled by authority, misled by ear and cowardice. Then the destructive weeds will spread to suddenly and rapidly that the word “wilderness” will recur to our minds willy-nilly. I believe we are no strangers to this discovery.

Yet for all this, where are the voices that should ring out in protest and accusation? There should never be any lack of prophets like John the Baptist in the kaleidoscope of life at any period; brave men and women inspired by the dynamic compulsion of the mission to which they are dedicated, true witnesses following the lead of their hearts and endowed with clear vision and unerring judgment. Such persons do not cry out for the sake of making a noise or the pleasure of hearing their own voices, or because they envy other people the good things which have not come their way on account on their singular attitude toward life. They are above envy and have a solace known only to those who have crossed both the inner and outer borders of existence. Such persons proclaim the message of healing and salvation. They warn us of our chance, because they can already feel the ground heaving beneath their feet, feel the beams cracking and the great mountains shuddering inwardly and the stars swinging in space. They cry out to us, urging us to save ourselves by a change of heart before the coming of the catastrophes threatening to overwhelm us.

Alfred Delp, sj, “Prison writings: Modern spiritual masters series,” pages 16-17