



SIEBENQUELL

Foster Friendship with Emptiness



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Advent tries to open our hearts for something that we only note and accept with great difficulty. The Advent season poses the question of emptiness and its significance for our spiritual lives. However, emptiness is mercilessly stuffed, covered over, ignored and suppressed in our society and in our Church.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah, many words of yearning ring out. One of my beloved words from his book is: »It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.« (Isaiah 2, 2-5)

So much yearning is contained within these few lines. There is the yearning that life might yet come to a good end. There is the yearning that people will be moved, that justice might prevail and determine the future, and there is the yearning that the instruments of destruction might be transformed into tools that serve life.

Yet words of yearning are always born in and of emptiness. Who cares what will come to pass in the latter days when all we experience and feel is fullness? Why should the nations set out for other places if they already have everything they need at home? Justice and right judgement are always a yearning in people who had to withstand a long time in the emptiness of injustice. And the yearning that swords be beaten into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks, that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and war preparations cease, is surely stronger in the Syrian people in the emptiness of their destroyed cities than among the Americans in their super abundance.

It is told, that when Tiberius had conquered Jerusalem, he rode into the temple on his horse and pushed the curtain to the Holy of Holies aside. It was empty.

At this time of the year, we do everything possible to pull the curtain back into place and shut out the emptiness. The question of emptiness is too threatening, too complex. Thus, we smother it in candy canes and eggnog, with consumption on a grand scale, blinding lights and ceaseless noise.

The questions of the Advent season are complex. What emptiness do I have within me? Do I still have contact to my emptiness, or have I stuffed it full or smothered it with anything and everything at my disposal? How should this emptiness be filled? With what shall it be filled? By whom shall it be filled?

Only those who pose these questions will understand what awaits us at the end of Advent. A child is born, a son given unto us. However, the father of this child is the one, who fills the emptiness. He is the father of this child. He who lives in the Holy of Holies and fills the emptiness of this great space, he is the father of this child.

Emptiness is not our enemy. It is the chance to become attentive for the fullness of life. It can make us sensitive where our satiety has numbed us.

Everyone knows that there was no room for child or parents at the inn, because it was full. Every place was taken. No spot was left vacant, no room was allowed to remain empty. Without the necessary space created by emptiness, there is no place for the child to be born, no place to receive the new life from God.

Therefore, we should foster friendship with emptiness. It is not our enemy. It desires more. It craves a life we cannot give ourselves and opens us to that, which we cannot seize. But if we leave a little space, permit a little emptiness, we could receive something that we neither awaited nor planned, but which we so desperately need.

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