



SIEBENQUELL

Advent Reflection III

»Human, Holy Instrument, live out your Complexity!«



QUELLENANGABE: VINCENT M./NOTRE-DAME_DE_PARIS

At the end of the conversation between Gabriel and Mary, after she asks the question, »How can this be, since I have no husband?« (cf. Lk 1,34-38), the archangel does not explain to her how the pregnancy will occur, nor does he reassure her that God will be with her. Instead, he emphasises that Mary does not have to do anything to bear the Son of the Most High. On the contrary, she must allow something to happen: »The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.« She must allow for the Spirit to come upon her and the power to overshadow her. When she opens herself to the power of the Most High, new possibilities for life will open up. Gabriel explains to Mary what her partnership with God will look like.

This partnership between God and humankind is clear in the Greek text. »For nothing is impossible with God« literally means, »every word of God's is not without power.« When Mary responds with »let it be to me according to your word,« it means, »let that word be my word.« Human awareness has the task of aligning itself with God's intention. The archangel says, »Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.« If we enter into this partnership with God, what is born of us will be called holy.

This story is not as simple as it sounds, and for good reason. For our story with God is never as simple as we imagine it to be. Authentic stories of faith begin with a call to greater complexity.

Let us return to the organ at Notre Dame de Paris for a third time. At the end of all the restoration work, the Grand Organ consisted of 8,000 pipes, five manuals and pedals, and 109 registers. It is one of the most extensive instruments in France. Its great complexity has been restored.

The eight calls to awakening on the evening of the reopening of Notre Dame describe complex tasks for this complex sacred instrument. Let us listen to all eight calls to awakening that Archbishop Laurent Ulrich sang to the organ:

Wake up, organ, sacred instrument!

Speak and sound the praises of God our Creator and our Father!

Organ, sacred instrument,

celebrate Jesus, our Lord,

who died and rose for us!

Organ, sacred instrument,

sing to the Holy Spirit,

who animates our life with the breath of God!

Organ, sacred instrument,

lift our hymns and our supplications to Mary,

the Mother of God!

Organ, sacred instrument,

lead the assembly of the faithful

in thanksgiving to Christ!

Organ, sacred instrument,

bring the consolation of the faith

to those who are in pain!

Organ, sacred instrument,

support the prayer of Christians

and accompany the prayer of little ones!

Organ, sacred instrument,

proclaim the glory of the Father,

the Son and the Holy Spirit!

Gabriel also tells us: »Every word of God's is not without power«. Then we should take a closer look, because there are eight powerful words that are also directed at our revival as God's holy instruments:

1. **Speak and sound praises.** In a world of never-ending criticism, constant complaints, bitterness, agitation, and cynicism, it is a testimony to God to express and sing praise.
2. **Celebrate life.** in a world of numbing distractions, where, as Neil Postman describes it, we are "amusing ourselves to death", we should celebrate what truly constitutes and signifies an authentic, full life.

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3. **Sing of that which animates life:** In Matthew 12:34, Jesus says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." When our hearts are full of everything that sustains and nurtures life, we should sing and talk about it. However, if we allow ourselves to be bombarded day and night with trivial melodies and meaningless lyrics, then we know what our hearts are overflowing with.
 4. **Lift up hymns and supplications:** We are called upon to uphold the tensions of life, the songs and supplications, the gratitude and lamentations. We should lift up to God everything that belongs to us and to life, with names, faces and stories.
 5. **Lead the assembly of the faithful in thanksgiving:** This will only be possible if we do not take everything for granted.
 6. **Bring the consolation of the faith:** We will succeed in this if we look beyond our own issues, questions and concerns. We should let go of our stubborn self-absorption and instead immerse ourselves in the Stories of God and the Stories of Faith, which are grander, broader and deeper than our own stories and can show us horizons of hope.
 7. **Support prayer:** We should do everything in our power to have the deepest conversations about life and matters of the heart. Ultimately, we don't want to talk only to ourselves and those who share our views. However, this will never happen to those who seek dialogue with God.
 8. **Proclaim glory:** Let us speak well of this world, of our brothers and sisters, of ourselves and of God. People who live as holy instruments always point to stories of salvation.

So, at the end of this series, I call out to you what Archbishop Laurent Ulrich sang to the organ:

Humans, you holy instruments of God,
 Speak and sound praises,
 celebrate life,
 sing of that which animates life,
 lift up hymns and supplications,
 lead the assembly of the faithful in thanksgiving:
 bring the consolation of the faith.
 support prayer and
 proclaim glory.

»Every word of God's is not without power.« Do we want to be holy instruments, like Mary? Will we, like her, say, »Let that word be my word«? If so, then what flows from us, what resounds from within us, what is born in us, will be called holy. And not only during Advent.

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