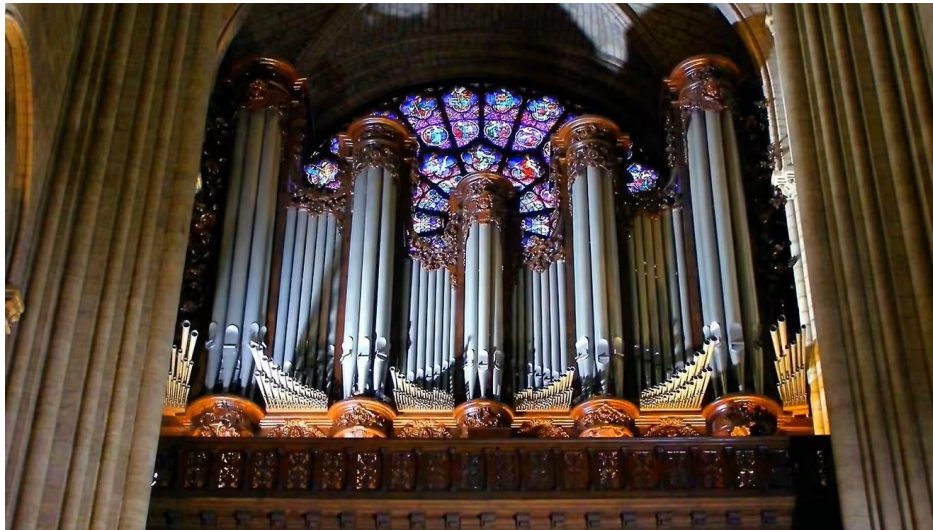




SIEBENQUELL

Advent Reflection I

» Awake, human being, sacred instrument!«



GREAT ORGAN OF NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS, DECEMBER 2024

The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 30:19–26) makes ample use of powerful images of promise:

The Lord will give us bread when there is need and water when we are in distress. It will become clear who our teachers are. Our ears will hear words of guidance. He will send rain for the seeds to grow, and the fruits of the field will be plentiful and rich. The meadows where the herds will find space will be vast. On every high mountain and every towering hill there will be streams and watercourses. And there will be light, lots of light. » Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days...«

We quickly tend to wish that all this will not only happen, but that it will happen swiftly and soon. In doing so, we place all our expectations and the entire burden of the story on God. He, and He alone, is now responsible for fulfilling the promise. The only question that remains is: Will He keep His word or not? However, there is a perspective that is easily overlooked, even though it is of crucial importance. What if God created us in such a way that He wants to fulfil His promises through us? What if God created us in a wonderful and amazing way (cf. Ps 139), but we are not aware of what He has placed within us?

On the evening of December 7th, 2024, Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris reopened Notre Dame Cathedral. Originally, I had not planned to watch more than a few minutes of the television broadcast. But I was captivated from the very first moment when Archbishop Ulrich called out in front of the main portal: »Notre Dame, model of faith, open your doors to gather the scattered children of God in joy,« before striking it three times with the tip of his crosier. The crosier itself was made from a beam from the cathedral's roof structure that had escaped the fire.

For me, the most impressive moment by far was when the archbishop blessed the organ by speaking to the mighty instrument eight times. He sang a call of awakening to the sacred instrument, which had to be cleaned and restored after the fire in 2019. Each time, the organ responded with increasingly powerful tones.

The »eight awakenings« for the blessing of an organ consist of a series of improvisations in which the celebrant assigns certain tasks to the organ, which the organist then performs. This was the first call with which the archbishop began his dialogue with the organ.

**»Awake organ, sacred instrument!
Speak and sound the praises of God our Creator and our Father!«**

Awake! The organ was not rebuilt but cleaned and renewed. The call is not to an organ builder to construct an instrument. The call is to a holy instrument, wonderfully and marvellously created, which has now been restored. Everything necessary to sing God's praise is already there.

The biblical eyes of Advent see in us such a holy instrument of God. We do not need to be rebuilt or even replaced but merely cleansed and renewed. Everything is already present within us to let the praise of God resound. We only need to be awakened.

**» Awake, human being, sacred instrument!
Speak and sound the praises of God our Creator and our Father.«**

This is also the beginning of the dialogue that God conducts with us at the start of Advent. The biblical narrative is full of this. Ephesians 5, 14 says: **»Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.«** Paul cries out to the Romans: **»Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.«** (Romans 13, 11) And the prophet Isaiah, with whose images of promise we began, cries out: **»Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.«** (Isaiah 52, 1)

Awake from your slumber. Awake from your silence. The first call of Advent is to become what we are in and before God.

Like the organ, we are called upon as God's sacred instruments to respond with ever more powerful sounds. This is part of our awakening, for we too must undergo purification and renewal so that everything that blocks, hinders or suffocates us no longer prevents us from being what we are by God's design.

Erik Riechers SAC

Vallendar, December 6th, 2025