



SIEBENQUELL

Rekindling our desire



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Advent should lead us to thoughtfulness, mindfulness, stillness and expectation. What we hardly talk about is the fact that Advent therefore calls us to rekindle our desire. God yearns to be desired, otherwise there will be no more magi to set out in search of him. Desire is fire, a being-driven and a blossoming. »Keep the longing awake. Desire always prays. Longing always prays, even when the tongue is silent. But when prayer falls asleep, longing grows cold. « (St Augustine)

For it is only after desire has been rekindled that imagination and fantasy can blossom. Every human being harbours undreamt-of worlds of beauty, possibilities and dreams. There is life in us, and not a little of it. But if we no longer feel any desire, then we will hardly make the effort to seek and realise any of it.

I attended a funeral this Advent that shook me to the core. The old, traditional words of the funeral rite were spoken, but they were bereft of all healing effect. For centuries, these words have carried and comforted people in the difficult hours of death. But in this case, there was no trace of longing and passion. There was no desire. The words were recited anaemically and monotonously. One text flowed into the next, without pause, without any sense of the meaning of

this hour. The life story of the deceased was presented in a clichéd, superficial and amateurish manner, but there was no acknowledgement of the grand story of his life, of his questions or his struggle with God. Even worse, there was no desire: no desire for new, eternal life or for resurrection. There was not even a desire to have the deceased with us again. Words and rituals were performed coldly and mindlessly. Every announcement at a railway station carries more passion.

No liturgical reform could have saved this funeral. If we no longer have fire in our hearts and souls, we will never celebrate an authentic and profound liturgy. If the desire is not ignited, then all the rites of our lives are meaningless masks. Everyone can read the words, but not everyone can proclaim them so that they reach, heal and strengthen hearts. When the illiterate of the heart take charge of the critical hours of life, then we can only expect a time of drought.

Advent always has something to do with desire. Advent wants to awaken feelings, spur us on to familiarity, awaken spontaneity, draw tears and dreams out of us. Advent wants to encourage and protect the desire within us. For without it, we live only in satiety and inertia. The shepherds in the field hear an angel saying to them: »Do not be afraid, for behold, I proclaim to you a great joy that is to come to all the people: Today in the city of David the Saviour has been born to you; he is the Christ, the Lord.« (Luke 2: 10-11) But if the shepherds feel no desire, they will not say: »Let us go to Bethlehem to see the event which the Lord has made known to us!« (Luke 2:15) They will simply return to their watch duty. Seeing a star in the sky is not enough to be a Magi. These three people express the longing that the star has awakened in them: »Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have seen his star rising and have come to pay him homage.« (Mt 2, 2). Otherwise, the star becomes a note in a book of astronomical observations.

In the Letter to the Ephesians it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will be your light.' (Ephesians 5:14) In all probability, the text comes from the early Christian baptismal liturgy. Our entrance into the life of God, as well as the birth of the child in Bethlehem into the life of the world, should rouse us from our sleep and awaken a desire in us. This child later becomes an adult and later says of himself: 'I have come to cast fire on the earth. How glad I would be if it were already burning!' (Luke 12:49) As people of the Season of Advent we should make every effort not to live like fire extinguishers.

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