



Longing for Unity and Peace (Advent Week 2)

Manila, Philippines

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This reflections was first posted by Audrey, fcJ on her blog, surprising-grace.blogspot.com.

This Sunday's first reading and psalm speak of the return of Israel's children, who were exiles in a strange land. "[L]ook to the east," says the prophet, "and see your children gathered from east and west.... Led away on foot by their enemies they left you, but God will bring them back to you..." (Baruch 5: 5-6)

Do you ever feel, like Israel, the pain of exile? Of alienation? That existential loneliness that comes from being disconnected from ourselves, from each other, from our environment, and therefore from God?

Much ink has been spilled on what some have now termed the "loneliness epidemic" in our societies. Technological innovation has made possible many improvements in the way we live. Through the internet we are more connected than ever – but, ironically, increasing numbers of people are feeling lonely, starved of quality contact with others. The influence of the digital world "can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously." (Laudato Si, 47) *Distracted by the overload of information and constant demands on our attention, we lose in our daily lives the quality of silence necessary for communion with ourselves and with God. Technology and city living have also deepened our alienation and disconnection with creation around us. We see nature as something to be exploited and controlled, losing our sense of delicate interdependence with it, and our sense of wonder and gratuity at God's gift.*

Loneliness is a symptom of this loss of balance. It is an alarm bell, calling us to attention.

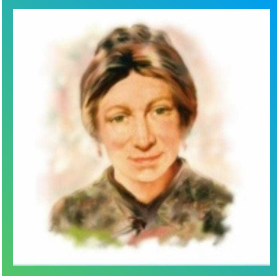
Our inner disharmony and fragmentation are also reflected in the violence and division that we see everywhere in the world. The anxiety and insecurity that we feel inside leads us to build barriers to protect ourselves from each other, especially those who look different from us, or those who might be a threat to our possessions or security. In response to this Pope Francis continually urges us: "Build bridges, not walls!" Our readings this Sunday give us hope that the wholeness and unity we long for is coming: for "[t]he winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Luke 3: 5-6)

What is required of us is to, like John the Baptist, "[p]repare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." What does this mean to each of us this Advent? In his letter to the Philippians, Paul prays "that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value." (Philippians 1: 9-10) *May we open our eyes and hearts more and more to recognise the "value" – the sacred beauty – of ourselves, each other, and all of creation. To relish its diversity as God's gift. To savour our interconnectedness with all that lives.*

Loving God, bring us back to each other this Advent. May our lives give hope to the world that we are all one in Christ incarnate, who lives already in each of us.

You can also download the reflections [here](#).

Note: The Scripture readings from the Second Sunday of Advent can be found [here](#).



“ La Sociedad no es obra mía; es obra de Dios y Dios sabrá cómo sostenerla, si es su voluntad. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

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