



Advent 2020.

+ Dear Family and Friends,

A pomegranate blossom, rather than any other star, seems the fitting emblem for this festive season, here in the southern hemisphere, where i find myself this year. Due to the pandemic, i'm still in Argentina, enjoying summer. Grateful though i am to be in good health and with very dear friends, it does feel strange to celebrate Advent, this time of waiting, without winter weather. When the usual trimmings are missing, however, it's easier to see the essentials. As i see it, the essence of Advent is silence. Is not at the very core of this time of year, celebrated by many traditions as a sacred season, a hushed stillness?

My favorite Christmas antiphon speaks of silence bringing forth word. Year after year, i find myself looking forward to that verse from the Book of Wisdom and its moving melody. This year, too, i shall be chanting it, for the Liturgy of the Hours unites me with my Brothers at the monastery.

While deep silence enveloped all things,
and night in its swift course was now half gone,
Thy all-powerful word leaped from heaven,
from the royal throne. (Book of Wisdom 18:14)

Many people experienced more silence in this past year, than in any other. We can receive this as a great gift. Mythic understanding knows: In order to be truly heard, a word needs "deep silence," for it is coming "from heaven." In

everyday experience, it is coming from right next door. Increased silence in the time of quarantine wants to teach us to listen with our hearts. It creates a unique opportunity to listen to those with whom we think to have nothing in common.

Wherever we look these days, we find society split in two. Neither of the two sides is listening to the other, yet nothing could be more urgently needed. 2021 calls for a New Year's resolution to seek out those whose opinions are the opposite of our own and to start listening to them; to bracket for a while convictions that divide us, facing instead our shared problems and tackling them together. If this year of worldwide suffering has made us ready to listen that deeply, every word that comes out of our silence will be a "yes" to mutual belonging. It will be what the antiphon calls it – an "all-powerful word." For it will be a word of love, and love is all-powerful.

With this hope before us, i wish you peace and joy,
Your brother David

