2nd Advent, Year A, Dec.4, 2016

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm 72

Romans 15-4-9

Matthew 3: 1-12

The trees, the flowers, the plants grow in silence. The stars, the sun, the moon move in silence. Silence gives us a new perspective.

Blessed Mother Teresa

Silence is not a passive thing. It’s not being shut up and shut off from the world in which we live. Silence gives us the chance to decide in which world do we wish to live? We can live in many worlds, all at once. Which do we choose?

Do we not want to live in a world where the Spirit of the Lord rests upon us: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of awe in the presence of our God? Of course we do. That’s why we come to church to find the way; discover the truth, and gain the resolve to live the way.

First we have to find the way.

St. John of the Cross was a mystic. He lived in this world but was not of this world. His world was a world of wonder and awe. His was a different way. He saw things differently. He understood things differently. He leads us on a different path. He writes:

Carve out a day every week, or an hour a day, or a moment each hour, and abide in loving silence with the Friend (St. John writes “Friend” with a capital “F”). Feel the frenetic concerns of life in the world fall away, like the last leaves of autumn being lifted from the tree in the arms of a zephyr. Be the bare tree.

St. John of the Cross

Be the bare tree. Let the wind of wisdom blow away mindless thoughts, hurt-full feelings, misguided ways. Silence the voices in our heads that fill us with nonsense, self-doubt, temptations of vanity and veniality, twisted thoughts of revenge cruelty, pride and prejudice. Examine our consciences to realize we must snip off leaves that are misshaped and withered. Be that naked tree now prepared by Wisdom to bear great fruit.

Dorothy Day tells us:

The more we live with people in a community, the more we must look to ourselves and regard the beam in our own eyes. The more we live with a babbling crowd, the more we must practice silence.

Dorothy Day

We must retreat from the world and reside in silence. Only then can we be purified and discover the world we were meant to live in and with whom we were meant to live.

Jerome K. Jerome begs us:

Come away from the din. Come away to the quiet fields, over which the great sky stretches, and where, between us and the stars, there lies but silence; and there, in the stillness, let us listen to the voice that is speaking within us.

Jerome K. Jerome

And Cynthia Bourgeault made this discovery:

It is becoming more and more clear to me that silence isn’t an emptiness. It isn’t so much an It as a Thou. Let’s see if we can deepen our own life of prayer by moving beyond thinking that silence is an emptiness, a backdrop or a condition, into thinking and actually experiencing silence as a mode of relationship with the infinitely present Beloved.

Cynthia Bourgeault

We have lighted the second purple candle of Advent. We have held onto the promise that Jesus will come again – our Friend and our Beloved. We do so in silence – a silence that is not passive but active, not receding but progressive.

If we quiet ourselves and let the candle light the way, we will prepare ourselves and each other for the Second Coming of the Christ. If we quiet ourselves, maybe, just maybe, we might hear the whisper of the Good Shepherd who calls us to Himself so He can wipe away our tears; hug us tight to stop our flailing arms, and whisper into our ears that we are His.