



Second Sunday of Advent reflection by Connecticut Chaplain

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***Vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini.*** The ancient Latin from both our first reading in Isaiah and Gospel on the second Sunday of Advent: *a voice crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord.*

Like that philosophical question if a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? It's a question for the ages about observation and perception. So if a voice cries in

the bleakness of the desert, does anyone notice? Whose voice and what did he say?

The Gospel puts it clearly: John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance that led to the forgiveness of sins. Note the chronology: repentance first, forgiveness follows. The problem though is that now, like then, the failure to hear in the wilderness of secularism is what Pope John Paul II once called the loss of the sense of sin in the modern world. In effect, that God will be as easy on me as I am on myself. In one way, let's hope so. But in another way, let's take both cousins at their word: clear Him a straight path. Which if the analogy holds: sweep the road, prune the bushes, take out the trash.

Advent for us should be more than liturgical: it is not only a reminder of something that has already happened, but –and here's the rub- it's also a foreshadowing of something to come, namely the proverbial thief in the night. Soren Kierkegaard once spoke about our use of clocks. The theologian in him thought that clocks created the illusion that time goes on and on without beginning or end. Kierkegaard said what we really need to focus the mind are hourglasses for “they constantly remind us for each of us time is running out.”

But Advent is also about hope. Did you ever notice that the two greatest feasts of Christian history begin in the dark? Christmas

and Easter come to us just after the dawn of a new day. Each brings new life. And that is our fundamental hope: that when each of us arrives at our final midnight moment, the Lord of history, nature and the universe will meet us on that path we have prepared over a lifetime through the wilderness and transform our faults and fears -- our death -- into life.

