**Advent Reflection: Week 2**

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Ding, Whoop, Bing, Whooosh. Phone, computer, and watch alerts demand our attention these days. We obey and react to our technological signals. We’ve seen watches that ask their owners to stand, walk, and even breathe! We seem to listen to devices more than our own minds, bodies, and spirits.

Benedictines emphasize spending time in prayer/meditation, reading spiritual texts, and engaging with people in meaningful ways. They believe these practices will lead them to their deepest selves and will call them to relationship with God and others. Sister Joan Chittister wrote, “St. Benedict’s Rule was not written for God, it was written for humans. We are deeply spiritual beings who are living human life.” We are deeply spiritual beings, longing for more. We long for meaningful relationships, fulfilling jobs, and lives of purpose. Unfortunately, we live in a whirlwind society where we are pushed to live reactionary lives, responding to endless alerts

St. Benedict’s Rule asks us to respond to our internal alerts. He asks us to listen to our minds, our bodies, and our spirits and to give priority to this practice. When we prioritize and create boundaries for ourselves, we are no longer driven by fear (rejection, loss, failure, etc.) from outside ourselves. When we give priority to spending time in prayer or meditation, reading spiritual texts, and engaging with people in meaningful ways, we acknowledge that there is more to this life than reacting and keeping up.

Benedictine practices invite us to reintroduce our deepest selves to the world. When we listen to our mind, body, and spirit, we give life to our soul. This only comes with practice. We begin by honoring our intuition.

The second week of Advent reminds us of Isaiah’s reference to the “voice calling in the wilderness” and of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. Are we able to take time to listen to our internal voice in prayer or meditation? This could be the voice of God! Maybe our deepest desires and intuitions are actually leading us towards a life to which we have been called. Can we honor our deepest selves? On Thursday we celebrate Mary’s Immaculate Conception. Our internal voices and deepest desires could be *our* babies, gifts that grow inside of us. They are from God and for the world. That could be *our* call to contribute to the world in our own very unique ways. This conception is between the soul and God. If we hear the voice today, harden not our hearts (Psalm 95).

Like Mary, we are the chosen ones. We have a unique and special gift for the world that is growing within. It is our duty to “listen with the ear of the heart (Prologue to the Rule of St. Benedict).” Listening to this voice, asks that we go to deep places within ourselves. The call is usually to make a certain decision. It may evoke change. It may be counter-cultural. And like a baby, it may transform life. Sometimes the voice within makes no logical sense. If we learn to listen to our bodies and the peace in our hearts when making decisions, we start to give life. Like birth, this process can be extremely difficult. In time, it will be liberating. With faith, your decision to listen to the voice will be liberating.

The voice is sometimes revealed in our prayers, silence, and physical or emotional reactions. When we follow the voice within we give birth to an idea or a way of being that comes from us, but it is not ours. Ultimately, it is our unique gift to the world. Once we make these difficult choices, we continue in a constant state of listening and discernment. We have let go and have faith in our path.

So in this Advent Season, can we set our fears aside? Will we turn our external alerts off and search for those inside? We live very different lives. Our journeys are unique. We are called and our communities are patiently waiting for our baby within to give light to the world.