

## The gift of words in silence

In the village of Prickwillow in Cambridgeshire they have gone a little further than most to bring a touch of Christmas cheer. They have wrapped up the village telephone box with giant sheets of wrapping paper and a huge pink bow! The villagers hope that it will, 'Put a smile on people's faces.'

In this fun filled gesture, my learning heart sees a deeper meaning that has captivated my thoughts. It speaks to me of one of the greatest gifts we have – communication with each other. If you think about it, our days are filled to the brim with words – in song and poetry, in news and conversation. Through the T.V., papers, I.Pads and telephones. Words of love and anger, of despair and hope. To speak with and listen to others is a vital part of our lives.



**"I know nothing in the world that has as much power as a word."  
Emily Dickinson**

We get a sense of the power of words in the Gospel of the second week of Advent. Luke tells us that: 'The word of God came to John, son of Zachariah, in the wilderness.' His response on hearing this word was to go through the whole of the Jordan district crying out to people of the arrival of the Lord. John was pointing people to Christ.

At this busiest time of the year, when we are pulled in so many directions, the call of John the Baptist's message is still very real. He is pointing us to Christ too. The Word made flesh. This call is for us to be alert, to see Christ in the very bits and pieces of our lives. To let his words touch us and transform us. How can this be done? Well, for John, I am almost sure that his response to the word of God was so strong, so sure because it was heard, 'In the wilderness.' In its silence he gave God's call a chance to be heard. His wilderness turned out to be a place of flourishing beauty.

**Let the wilderness and the dry lands exult  
Let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,  
Let it bring forth flowers like the Jonquil  
Let it rejoice and sing for joy  
Isaiah 35**



*Jonquil*

In my family this Advent, we are trying to make time for a little silence. Each Sunday evening we are coming together in front of the fire and we are sitting without T.V., papers, I.Pads or telephones. In this wilderness of silence, we are letting ourselves sit in peace and be still. This isn't for long – ten minutes or so – but within the solitude we are all aware of a deep peace descending and in our stillness we somehow feel closer to each other.

In this time together we are learning to listen to the word of God – in the crackle of the fire, in the flicker of the candle, in the quiet, rhythmic pattern of our own breathing. I feel that this time is gently allowing us to become aware of a quiet light that is shining within our own hearts. A light that John O'Donohue says, '**...draws no attention to itself though it is always secretly there. It is what illuminates our minds to see beauty, our desire to seek possibility and our hearts to love life.**'

This light is the very light of Christ and the awareness of it brings with it a sense of clarity, of purity and of peace. I am getting a sense that the whispers of God's word that we hear in these moments of silence on Sunday don't stop there. They continue doing their work as the week unfolds. They stay with us all as they become woven into the fabric of our daily interactions and conversations. They are pure gift and are giving us a chance to move through Advent with a real sense of the presence of the, 'Word of God who dwells amongst us.'