

Homily for 3rd Sunday of Advent

One question confronts us on this Third Sunday of Advent:
Who is he?

Who is this figure in the desert that everyone is going out to see? St. Matthew calls him John the Baptist. St. Mark calls him John the Baptizer. St. Luke refers to him as John, the son of Zechariah. But St. John simply refers to him as John. Even more interesting, when the priests and Levites confront this character and ask “Who are you?”, he does not even give his name.

Actually, St. John recalls that this character responds to a litany of names in order to tell those who question him who he is not. He is not the Messiah. He is not Elijah. He is not a prophet.

In frustration the priests and Levites beg him to say something of who he is. And, quoting the great prophet Isaiah, this is his answer: “I am a voice...” A voice that cries out in the wilderness to make straight the way of the Lord.

If this man in St. John’s Gospel is a voice, the further question is: what is the voice saying to us? This voice is telling us to look for the One who is coming. Look for the One who is coming to touch our hearts so that we might discover Him not in the tinsel and trappings of

Christmas. Rather, that we might discover Him in the poor, in those in need, in the person who is forgotten, picked on, bullied and the stranger who is unwanted and unloved. We are to discover Him in those forgotten in nursing homes, in the homeless and those who struggle with addictive behaviors. We are to discover Him in all that we are so that we might find Him in all that He is for others. We are the ones who need Christ to be born in our hearts so that the richness of Christ's love may call us to love one another....not in theory, but in practice.

We wait for Christmas...but we rejoice. Rejoice because Christ is coming...not to some distant land in some long-forgotten time, but coming now to heal our hearts. The voice cries out...make straight the way of the Lord. Prepare a path so our hearts might be ready to once again cradle the love of God made real in Jesus Christ.