

## Advent 3A

### *Are you the One?*

In today's gospel, followers of John the Baptist approach Jesus to ask Him if He is the "One who is to come", or whether they are supposed to wait for another.

John the Baptist apparently is not all that sure. Remember that he is the one who bore witness to Jesus at the beginning of His ministry, who baptized Him, and specifically identified Him as "the One." But now, it seems he has his doubts. From prison he has heard of Jesus' ministry, and it obviously is nothing like what he had imagined. In his vision, the Christ that was coming was an angry Christ as judge. "I baptize you with water for repentance," he had proclaimed, "... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." (Matt. 3:11-12) But what he sees is something quite different. Up to now, there has been no fire, no judgment. John is puzzled, so he sends his followers to investigate: "Are you really the One?" they ask.

Jesus doesn't give them a direct answer: He tells them to go tell John

what they see: "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." (Matt 11:4-5) Jesus knows that John has read his Bible and will recognize this quote from Isaiah: that will answer John's question.

There's a point here that we should all take to heart. Too often, we find ourselves searching, not for Jesus, but for the image of Him we have formed in our own minds. Too often we take it for granted that Jesus agrees with *us*, that our 'agenda' is Jesus' agenda, and when things don't turn out the way we think they should, we become discouraged, frustrated, even angry. Some people even lose their faith entirely, when Jesus doesn't live up to *their* expectations.

Now this is very natural. We've just seen that even John the Baptist is perplexed, and in the gospels we see over and over again how the disciples themselves were constantly projecting their own agendas on Jesus. The supreme example, of course, is there in the events of Holy Week. At the beginning of the week everyone is expecting Jesus to proclaim Himself Messiah and to claim His Kingdom, kick out the Romans and restore the fortunes of Israel.

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By the end of the week, the crowds have given up on Him, the disciples have fled, and He dies the death of a common criminal. Everybody is convinced that He has failed. And then He rises from the dead and turns everyone's expectations upside down: nothing has been the same since.

Of course later, when they reflected on Jesus' life, the disciples realized that the 'signs' had been there all along: that if they had opened their eyes and hearts, if they had paid attention to what He was saying, rather than their own expectations, they would have

understood all along what the 'real' agenda was.

And that is the lesson for all of us who follow him, that is the lesson of this Advent Season. God will act: He knows what He's doing. So let us put aside our own expectations, our own agendas and wait patiently for Him to fulfill His promise. As James writes in today's second reading: "The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient."

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**SAINTS:**

**Lucy of Syracuse, 13 December.** Lucy was a native of Syracuse in Sicily. She lived at the beginning of the fourth century, when the Roman authorities were attempting to re-establish the worship of gods they approved. The emperor himself was the focus of one of the cults. Tradition has it that Lucy, as a young Christian, gave away her goods to the poor and was betrayed to the authorities by her angry betrothed, who felt that they should have become his property. She was put to death for her faith in the year 304. Her name in Latin means Light and, as her feast-day fell in December, she became associated with the one true Light who was coming as the redeemer of the world, the Light that would lighten the nations, the Light that would banish darkness and let the eyes of all behold Truth incarnate.

**John of the Cross, 14 December.** Born to an impoverished noble family near Avila in Spain in 1542, Juan de Yepes was brought up by his widowed mother and went to a charity school. He worked as a nurse and received further education from the Jesuits before entering the Carmelite order when he was twenty-one. Having distinguished himself at Salamanca university, he was ordained in 1567 and met Teresa of Avila soon afterwards. Small of stature, he made a great impression on her and she persuaded him to help with her reform of the Carmelite order. His labours brought him into conflict with the religious authorities, and he was even imprisoned for a period, yet these experiences prompted some of his finest poetry and mystical writing. In particular, he described the 'dark night' of the soul as it is purified in its approach towards God. After ten years as superior to several different houses, he again fell out of favour and was banished to Andalusia in southern Spain, where he died after a severe illness on this day in 1591.

## **NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:**

OT: Isaiah 7:10-16

Epistle: Romans 1:1-7

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

## **COMING UP:**

December 17.

- *Wedding, 2:30p.m.*

December 18.

- *Wedding, 2:00p.m.*
- *Advent Lessons & Carols, 6:30p.m.*

December 24.

- *Family Service, 4:30p.m.*
- *Midnight Service, 10:00p.m.*

December 25.

- *Christmas Morning, 10:00a.m.*

January 01, Feast of the Holy Name.

- *Eucharist, 7:30a.m. & 9:30a.m.*