

ADVENT WEEK 3

Be Grateful for John



*What did you go out to the desert to see—a reed swaying in the wind? ...
Someone dressed in fine garments? ... Then what did you go out to see? A prophet?
Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.*

LUKE 7:24-26



ESIDES JESUS, NO PERSON appears in the readings of the Advent season more than John the Baptist. The two men, although they lived at the same time, could not have been more different. John lived in the desert, dressed in camel fur and eating wild locusts. Jesus' dress seems to have had nothing distinctive about it and he was known to dine at table and enjoy wine. John had a fiery personality.

Jesus, most of the time, seems to have been more subdued. Both men had fallen in love with God's vision for the world—God's Kingdom. Both wanted to see that vision realized. Both were such effective preachers that they drew lots of followers. Some people who study the Bible think it possible that the two would have been natural rivals, each competing for the same followers. This might be why the Gospel of Luke goes to

such efforts to say that they were cousins, members of the same family. It's meant to give us a clue that even though they were very different and maybe preached about the Kingdom of God in very different ways, they were both playing on the same team and ultimately pulling in the same direction.

The mission of Catholic health care in today's world is vast and complex. It's sometimes hard to know what is the best way to move forward in fulfilling that mission. We work on teams filled with lots of different personalities. We have different opinions about how to respond to the challenges before us. But it helps now and then to step back and remember, we are meant to work together as "cousins" who share a common love for the Kingdom of God in the midst of our diversity.

In the readings of this week, we remember that John faced a lot of disillusionment toward the end of his life. He'd been arrested by the local ruler and was being held in prison. He was wondering whether all the work he'd done in his life had value. He

sent a few of his followers to Jesus to find out what was going on in the Jesus camp. Was there still reason to hope, even though Jesus' way of going about the mission was so different than his own? Jesus assures John's followers that there was reason to hope, but more than that, he praises John as a true prophet. Indeed, more than a prophet. He goes on to say there is no one greater than John. One senses Jesus' heart overflowing with gratitude for this man, so unlike himself yet fully his partner in mission.

This week, call to mind one of your co-workers who perhaps sees things very differently than you do. See if you can begin to think of this person less as a competitor and more as a "cousin," who perhaps wants many of the same things that you do, even if this person has a different notion of how to go about getting those things. Consider this person's strengths and what you admire about her or him. Look for an opportunity to publicly praise this person if possible. And pray that God might show you how best to work together for the good of the common mission.

