

JANUARY 2, 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

I just love this Scripture passage.

This conversation between the people the Pharisees sent, the Jewish leadership, and John. "Who are you?" And they were sent, of course, because John was gathering a lot of disciples around him and the people in Jerusalem, the leadership, was getting a little worried. "Who this guy?" And so, John answered, "I am the voice, the one crying out in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord." And quoting Isaiah.

Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that you are? And we often can misidentify who we are. So many identify themselves with their position in society. "I'm a police officer", "I'm a judge", "I'm a pianist", or whatever. But it's not a good way to identify ourselves of who we are because if something happens to us then so... for instance, uh... someone I knew way back, he was a police officer. And the time he was retiring and he had to hand in his service revolver, he all of a sudden went in a crisis. He did not know who he was.

And so, it is...

It is so important for us to know who we are in God. How do we identify ourselves? And for many parents, actually, they also can say, "I'm making straight the way of the Lord for our children." Am I the light of Christ? Or you could say, "I'm trying to be a light of Christ for those around us." And then it doesn't matter if you're a police officer, if you're a judge, if you're a mechanic, it doesn't matter.

Am I someone who is evangelizing? This is very important. Actually, at this time of year, we're just in the new year, of course, and we just celebrated about a week ago the birth of Jesus, that renewal. And it's good to look at ourselves at this renewal - "How do I identify myself as someone?"

Today, of course, we celebrate the feast of St. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen. Two great theologians. If we would've asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" or "Who do you say that you are?" Sorry. They would not have said, "Oh, I'm Basil and I'm the Great. "You know, I am the one "who wrote the rule for Eastern Monasticism. "And I'm a great theologian." They never would've said that. The title 'the Great' was given to them by others.

They also would've said something, "I am maybe a son of God, or a worker in the vineyard "who's trying to show the light of Christ in my work." A different way of saying who we are. Both of them, of course, they were part of the Cappadocian Fathers. There was one more in the Cappadocian Fathers - Gregory of Nyssa. They were all three bishops, and they studied together, and they did a lot of work, theological work, for us.

We take for granted of course, today, the doctrine of the Dogma of the Trinity, and so on. But they did a lot of work on that, and defended the faith in a time of Arianism and all kinds of different teachings, and they brought many back to the church by their teaching and by their writings.

And, as I said before, St. Basil the Great, he's also a monk, and he wrote the rule for Monasticism. in the Eastern part of the church.

And so, in the Eastern Orthodox church, often those who are living in monasteries, for their rule. Just like in our church, in the Western tradition, we have the Rule of St. Benedict. But ways to live a simple life in Christ, and to be that light for others in our world.

Which is so important. They very much were early proponents of Christian Universalism. We often don't hear about it but in that view there's a view in the church that all will be okay in God, that we all will be united in God at one point. That nobody will be lost.

And, of course, we don't know that, it's a theological view, but it is one which we could pray with. We often have that old understanding of Purgatory and how in flames, and we're all going to get burned, and so on. But there is a few views in the early church already that we all will be gathered eventually in God. Purgatory is a time, of course, of cleansing and growing closer to God. And how that looks like? Of course we don't know.

Likewise, they were very instrumental in creating the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed, which we in Canada don't usually use, we use The Apostles' Creed, in the US they usually use The Nicene Creed. It's really a way of expressing our faith, and the true orthodoxy of our faith.

It's good maybe to spend some time with The Nicene Creed and to, um, to pray with it. Light from light, true God from true God, and so on. A God who is before all else. And a God who also knows who we are. A God who wants us back home after our life journey here on Earth. No matter who we are. A God who wants to cleanse our sins And a God who wants us to be a sign for others who have lost their way. Especially in today's world, so many have lost their way.

So many of our children, grandchildren, have lost their way, and they are stuck in a world which teaches something completely different than Christianity. And so the more reason to go back to our foundation - "Who am I in God? What is my mission here on Earth?" To go to that foundation.

Our mission on Earth is just like John the Baptist - to show the way to God. To show others the way to God. Amen.