

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jan 11th 2014

What initially caught my attention was the gospel phrase describing why John was baptizing.

...“because there was an abundance of water there and the people came to be baptized...”. Water and people. In truth John was offering something more. He was offering an introduction to Jesus. Then “...a dispute arose between the disciples of John and a Jew about ceremonial washings”. That led to concern about Jesus whom John had baptized. “...here he is baptizing and everyone is coming to him.” Why? Maybe he has more water? Maybe what Jesus is offering is somehow more/better than what John is offering. “You (disciples) yourselves can testify that I said that I am not the Christ, but that I was sent before him.” Jesus is offering himself.

In today’s world – public as well as private it is often difficult to know who, what or where Truth lies.

At times Truth and Untruth, Spirit-of-God and not-of-God spirit are very difficult to tell apart. Invitations of God and temptations not-of-God can be deceptively camouflaged. There are situations where invitations of God and temptations not-of-god are stark and clear, but more often than not, there are very subtle differences. Making matters more difficult there can be more than one good, truthful invitation of God.

In the first reading we hear, “...the Son of God has come and given us discernment to know the one who is true.” Discernment as Ignatius describes is not solely a matter of making a decision – do this or do that. Discernment is not a stand-alone decision. Discernment is a commitment. Decisions are made in light of the fundamental commitment to follow Jesus or not.

All of this seems rather academic, but upon personal reflection, I recognize many times when I have not recognized the subtle distinctions and opted for good or even better but not the best in light of my commitment, my long ago discernment to follow Jesus. It has not always been easy. I have often floundered and at times failed. Discernments and decisions take time, prayer, paying attention, noticing, quiet and silence. Space to be present to the Spirit. Had I been there that day, I may not have seen the difference – baptized by John, or baptized by Jesus. To follow John or to follow Jesus? What’s the difference? Choice of a good invitation my eventually lead to the better, the best choice of invitations.

What was the familiar phrase written above so many of the Catholic grade school’s blackboards of the 1950’s. “All for Jesus through Mary”. Remember that?

The good news of today’s readings “...we who sit in darkness have seen a great light...” Alleluia

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