

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jan 2nd 2016

Memorial of Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

A new year, a new beginning. This time of year is so full of hope and promise.

I always get a boost of energy from new beginnings... a new month, a new semester, a new fiscal year, and the ultimate new beginning is the New Year. With the new I am bombarded with top ten lists and suggestions for the best resolutions. And I readily jump in to the excitement.

My default mode is gratitude and reflecting upon blessings I have received during the past year. Yet I have barely taken my spiritual and emotional inventory before I jump into the resolution fray by enthusiastically developing ambitious plans about how I can be a better person, a better family member, a better member of community... eat less sugary treats, exercise more, pray more deeply, let others know how much they mean to me. What good are these inspirations without exploring who I am?

Today's gospel offers an opportunity to appreciate John the Baptist's sense of self. As I contemplated the scene described I feel a sense of calm resolve from John. He is not trying to convince anyone about who he is or what he is trying to do. He answers the questions from the priests and the Levites calmly and resolutely. John does not explain away his behavior nor does he need invented resolutions which focus on how he can love and serve Jesus.

John is a powerful model of knowing who he is and how he focuses. With John as a touchstone to help me explore times I am influenced by the questions or assumptions of others in defining myself. As I reflect upon this upcoming year I can gain insights by asking myself the questions John heard from the priests and Levites. How will I respond this year when people ask me directly or metaphorically "what do you have to say for yourself?" Today's first reading offers a wonderful reminder that we have been given all we need to love and serve God by having been given the truth. "Let what you heard in the beginning remain in you."

"Remain in him" is the only New Year's resolution we need.

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