

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“Who are you then,” they asked John the Baptist. I am not the Christ. I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘make straight the way of the Lord.’”

(John 1: 25)

Sometimes in life before we come to know who we are we come to know who we are not. Almost by process of elimination we begin to rule out various roles and various occupations and various understandings of ourself. Slowly we begin to grasp who we are and how we are in the life roles we live out each day. This is not new. This has been going on as long as there have been people on this earth.

Today’s gospel from the Gospel of St. John the Evangelist has this passage about John the Baptist. John the Baptist and Jesus are close in age. They are relatives. Remember when John’s mother Elizabeth was in her sixth month Mary came to visit with her. Mary herself was just about six weeks pregnant carrying Jesus. So the two are only about six months apart in age.

John the Baptist goes public first. He and Jesus have lost touch as sometimes happens with cousins in families. John bursts on the scene down by the Dead Sea and the environs around Jerusalem in the south. Jesus is in the north up in Galilee. But there was a buzz, a definite growing expectation on the part of many people that the long awaited Messiah was coming. So anybody who was a little different, a little out-of-the-ordinary would get questioned. “Are you the Messiah?” As happens in today’s reading.

But John knows who he is. “I am not the Christ. I am not the Messiah. I am the voice crying in the desert—Make straight the way of the lord. My job is to point him out to you. So, Behold the Lamb of God!” Can we hear this proclamation with new ears? The question of the week.