

Reflection

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Gail Addis, IHM

Imagine you are at a play and have the program in front of you. The program introduction (first chapter of John) tells us what the author believes about God and Jesus and Jesus' ministry. The second part of the introduction/chapter contains a whole list of witnesses to Jesus who, one by one, come on stage and identify Jesus for John's audience, for us. This gives John's hearers special knowledge as the drama of Jesus' life unfolds.

First on stage is John the Baptist, who testifies that he is not the Messiah but was sent to prepare the way. John introduces Jesus to two of his disciples with the words: "Behold the Lamb of God ... he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit ... he is the Son of God."

Exit John and enter Andrew, who was one of the two disciples who had followed Jesus, talking to his brother Simon, saying "we have found the Messiah." He then takes his brother to Jesus.

Next up is Philip telling Nathanael: "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote. ..." Finally today, Nathanael proclaiming, "You are the Son of God, the King of Israel." John's intent is Christological: it is to make known the purpose, nature and role of Christ through all these witnesses.

What does it mean for us today to witness to Christ? To witness to the liberating mission of Jesus? Like the witness mentioned in the Gospel, the primary criterion for being a witness is to have personal experience of Jesus ... to have seen and experienced for oneself. Second, we must let Jesus know us as we actually are, like Nathanael, without pretense. Third, we must listen to what stirs our minds and hearts about who Jesus is for us today. Finally, we must not be afraid to proclaim what we have experienced and come to believe, to those close to us and in the wider community.

I always have more questions than answers. Can we find a common language amidst our "differences in beliefs, values and practices" and our evolving understandings of the mystery of the Sacred universe that will enable us as a community to continue to bear witness, and not only as individuals? What are the names for Jesus, for God, that flow from our experience and understandings today?

Who is Jesus/God for us through the constantly changing lens of the ever-expanding universe? Do we experience Jesus or God as Holy Mystery, the Great Attractor, the Love that fills the universe, the Breath of our life, Evolutionary God, the Omega or some other name? How are we called to witness to who God has become for us in our time and place in this unfolding story?

If, we, like Ilia Delio, have come to understand Jesus as a whole maker, then our witness will be about doing what he did and “loving the world into new being and new life” through the creation of right relationships with one another, the whole Earth community and the cosmos.

Whatever our names for God, whoever God is for us, individually and communally, we need to remember the words of Jesus: “You did not choose me, I chose you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.” (John 15:16)

We are about God’s work, not our own.