An Advent Reflection

Written by Sr. Kathleen Woody, GNSH

Who is God? What is God?

Matthew’s eleventh chapter begins with questions as old and universal as humanity’s relationship with a deity. Israel had contributed some answers to these inquiries: God was one; God did not demand human sacrifice as the neighboring god Baal did.

Greek and Roman philosophers, Babylonian theologians, priests in various cults argued these questions. But the topic was so basic that it didn’t seem odd for a prisoner and an itinerant preacher also to discuss God’s nature.

John was perplexed. He had been sent to prepare the way for Jesus, the man John thought was the Messiah. His message of baptism and repentance for sin touched many who heard him preach. His following was so great that it scared King Herod and his wife. Why were they so afraid? Because the Messiah John believed in was a mighty warrior who would rally the Jews and push the Romans by force out of Israel. Rome and its puppet kings such as Herod would be gone. Therefore, John was arrested for being a rabble-rouser.

In prison, however, John heard of the works of Jesus and sent his disciples to ask this question, “Are you the one or should we look for another?” Jesus did not answer yes or no. Instead, he pointed John toward the Scriptures and the reality of the world around them. Jesus knew that John was a prayerful man, graced with an open mind and heart, a true messenger of God able to adapt to God’s plan and not cling to an idea with which he had been raised.

In our own time, we, like John the Baptist and billions of saints and sinners, seek to know who and what God is. With our limited humanity, we can never grasp God completely. However, if we try, we can develop a deeper understanding and closer relationship with our Creator God. We can listen and be open to what God tells us in prayer, in the Scriptures, in the world around us. We can hear what God wants from us personally – to allow God to love us, and to spread love to all God’s children.

This Advent is a good time to follow St. James’ advice:

You too must be patient.
Make your hearts firm,
because the coming of the Lord is at hand.

James 5:8