Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

December 12, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



"By what authority are you doing these things?" (Matt 21:24).

Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matt 21:23-27

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), Spanish reformer and mystic, is sometimes credited, along with his contemporary St. Teresa of Avila, with influencing the emergence of what is now called psychology, the science that explores human interiority. John's writings, like Teresa's, described the search for God as an inner journey and exploration.

To know God, and specifically the humanity of Jesus Christ, was to find the source and the key to human development and purpose. John's "dark night of the soul" was a necessary stage in this journey as believers face their own incompleteness and total dependence on God's grace.

Jesus' critics demand to know the source, or authority, of his teachings about God and his power to restore people to wholeness. "Who gave you this authority?" they asked. Jesus does not answer them directly, but instead challenges their response to John the Baptist. Was his authority from heaven or only earthly? If the priests and elders said, "John was from God," then why didn't they accept him? If they said that John's authority was not from God, they would lose the support of the people, who revered John as a prophet.

Caught in this dilemma, the priests and elders refused to answer Jesus's challenge, so he refuses to answer their question about the source of his own ministry. But it should have been obvious, and it was obvious to anyone open to the mystery Jesus was revealing. No one could do the things he was doing unless he was from God.

As we advance through Advent toward Christmas, we are being invited to seek and find Jesus in the mystery of our own inner landscapes. For some, this is desert land, a wilderness of longing or a dark night of the soul. The promise of this holy season is that the nourishing rains will make the desert bloom and the coming dawn will dispel the darkness of fear and doubt. God is being revealed in all things, especially in the outpouring or mercy that heals us from within and makes us the source of mercy to one another.

The Gospel is a love story between God and the world, and we are both in the story and sent to tell the story to others. Have courage, don't be afraid. God does not disappoint, and love is stronger even than death. This is the joy of the Gospel.

Revised from 2015

Advertisement