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## Third Monday in Advent "Reveal Yourself"

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**Third Monday in Advent**  
**December 13, 1993**  
**John 1:19-34**  
“Reveal Yourself”

It was dark, but not that dark. Floodlights on each building spread light beyond their focused cone, and ambient light was high enough for me readily to identify the approaching figure. It was only an exercise, designed to prepare the bundled-up but still-shivering basic trainees with the empty M-16s for military life. As one of those trainees, my task was clear-cut; I was to initiate a recognition exchange with the time-honored “Halt! Who goes there?” and follow it with “Advance and be recognized!” But I already recognized the approaching figure as the lieutenant who had put us out on guard duty and was now, at the shift’s end, returning to take us back to the comparative comfort of our barracks. Hence the quandary—do I sing out the expected challenge and play the game, or do I ignore the rules, presume that I’m right, and head for the shelter of the waiting truck?

As we read the story of John’s witness, we usually see it, as we are intended to, from John’s viewpoint. We cheer this roughly-dressed, plain-speaking forerunner when “he confessed, and denied not—I for my part am not the Christ.” Think of the temptation, when being mistaken for one of the great figures of the faith! He knew what was on their minds when they asked who he was. When they pressed him with specifics—Elijah, or the Prophet?—he continued his stout denials. Then he pointed to Jesus. How easy it is to look at our success and lose sight of our true nature and purpose. That’s

why John's reply to their query "who are you and what do you have to say about yourself?" is so significant.

My long-ago guard duty experience—and my present occupation—lead me to view the story of John's witness from another perspective: that of the questioners. By tradition they are the "heavies," minions of the folks who would eventually crucify Christ. Our religious experience and expression tend to stifle questions and those who ask them. By habit we adopt a viewpoint that automatically condemns questioners as non-religious at best, anti-religious and evil at worst. Yet John's questioners also performed a necessary function. Without their queries, John would have missed the chance to give his testimony. Jesus himself refused to condemn questioners, the woman at the well being the best example.

John's story elicits a different response from the usual in me this Advent season. I see the Manger Child looking up at me with a question—"who are you and what have you to say about yourself?" The query probes my soul as I stammer an answer. My answer to His question shapes itself into the ultimate question: "What do you want me to be?" The child smiles.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to never fear our questions, whether they are asked of us or by us. Help us in reverence, awe, and wonder join the Host of heaven in asking "What Child is this?"

# Ray Granada