

## Advent 3B - December 2023

### What Are You Looking For?

Chaim Potok was an intensely religious man; a Jew who explored the dimensions of faith in our lives. From an early age, Potok knew he wanted to be a writer. But his mother wasn't so sure. When he went away to college she said, "Son, now I know you want to be a writer. But I want you to think about brain surgery. You'll keep a lot of people from dying. And you'll make a lot of money." To which Potok responded, "No, Mama, I want to be a writer."

But, "No," is not what Mama wanted to hear. So, every vacation break for four years she would repeat her comments about his becoming a brain surgeon and keeping people from dying and making a lot of money, and always his response was the same. Finally the son had enough, and, when the same mantra began, he cut off his mother with exasperation, and with great passion he told his mother, "Mama, I don't want to keep people from dying, I want to show them how to live."

This morning's Gospel Lesson from John is a "call" story, but unlike so many call stories in scripture this one is not crisp, dramatic, or decisive. Today there is no flashing light, no booming voice, no clear instructions as to what the disciples are to do. Instead, what we hear is Jesus asking a question - a strange, penetrating question. But it is the question that forms the foundation for understanding "call" for understanding vocation. The question is: "What are you looking for?"

(by Susan R. Andrews from *Sermons for Sundays: In Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany: The Offense Of Grace*,  
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### Soap and the Gospel:

A soap manufacturer and a pastor were walking together down a street in a large city. The soap manufacturer casually said, "The Gospel you preach hasn't done much good, has it? Just observe. There is still a lot of wickedness in the world, and a lot of wicked people, too!" The pastor made no reply, until, they passed a little child with dirty linen, making mud pies in the gutter. Seizing the opportunity, the pastor said, "I see, that, soap hasn't done much good in the world either; for, there is much dirt still here, and many people with dirty linen are still around." The soap manufacturer said, "Oh, well, **soap only works when it is applied.**" Then the pastor said, "**Exactly! So it is with the Gospel.**" (Fr. Francis Chirackal C.M.I.)