

From the very beginning of our lives, we look for someone when times are scary. As children, we look to our parents. In adolescence, we call up our friends. But where do we look when we are grown up – when we are the people that others are looking to for their own comfort? We look to our leaders. Faith leaders, government leaders, healthcare leaders, and even leaders within our family or community units are often our source of calm – our sense of stability in a storm. When the Hebrews were fleeing the Pharaoh, they followed a pillar of fire through the Egyptian desert (Exodus 13:17-22). When the disciples' boat was almost swamped by the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus was their stability (Luke 8:22-25). When we are trying to survive a pandemic, who do we look to? Who are our leaders?

Humanity naturally seeks out structure – every human, animal, or insect culture designates some to be in charge over others. But we must be very careful who we choose as our stability. Some leaders use fear to coerce people to follow them, while others rise to become leaders in times of crisis by stepping up to action. I can only imagine what was going through some of the Hebrews' minds as they left the safety of well-traveled roads to wander through an endless desert. Surely some in the crowd had their own ideas and were saying to each other, "Excuse me, what? We're going the wrong way! The road is over there!" When our fears take control, when the chattering storm in our minds threatens to swamp the boat, it is easy to jump ship and try to swim for shore. But we must remember to look to our leaders for our sense of calm.

In this viral catastrophe, the professionals in medicine and public health can be a stable voice in stormy times to know when to stay home and when it is safe to come out, who should seek treatment and who should settle into their bed with a good book and hot cup of tea. None of us living have ever been through a pandemic quite like this one, but there are a few who have come pretty close. Anthony Fauci, MD was named the director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Disease in 1984, the fifth and longest serving director in its 72-year history. He has advised six Presidents through crises like the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Ebola, SARS, MERS, and multiple flu outbreaks, and his research has led to new treatments for many autoimmune diseases. This is a man who knows how to be a voice of calm in a storm, and one worth listening to when other voices in the news or social media start chattering.

Leadership is not about being in charge of people. Leadership is about discovering and empowering the best in people. The amazing thing is – we can all be leaders. Chances are we all have someone who looks up to us – children, co-workers, friends, parents, clients, parishioners, patients. As we listen to the steady, consistent voices of our own leaders, let us endeavor to be a voice of calm for others, following recommendations for the safety and betterment of all God's children and trusting in the ultimate Leader who said "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). This pandemic may make us feel weak or powerless at times, but we have the chance to let God's power shine through us if we look out for each other, take care of our neighbor instead of competing with them, and lead by Christ's example saying "Peace, be still. It's going to be ok."