

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent Cycle B December 4, 2011  
*Isaiah 40:1-5,9-11 2 Peter 3:8-14 Mark 1:1-8*

There's Laurel and Hardy; aka Stan and Ollie. There's Abbot and Costello; aka Bud and Lou. There's Lucy and Ricky; aka Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez. Ozzie and Harriet. Starsky and Hutch. Just to name a few tandems of movie and television stars.

In sports there's Brady and Welker; Brady and Branch; Brady and Gronkowski; Brady and Hernandez. You get the picture.

There are many famous duos who hook up and work together, producing impressive results in their respective fields. They work closely together, sometimes spending more time together with each other than they do with their respective spouses. They practice their craft over and over and over again, until they reach near perfection. Be it in acting or in sports, or in the real world of regular folks like you and me, their goals and standards are set as high as one can humanly set them. It's what makes them so good.

And doing so as a team, a duo, is twice as difficult, because personalities, as we know, can get in the way. Personalities, as we know, have a tendency toward creating roadblocks more than solutions when working in union with one another. Not always. But two equals sharing the same stage, very talented at their craft, will produce enough tension at times to make a 400 pound gorilla turn and run for cover.

But not these two. Not John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ. Nor the Holy Spirit and water. Nor Mary and Joseph. Nor Jesus and his mother.

They all certainly dealt with reality like we do today. They addressed real life situations, such as Joseph carrying Mary and the child into Egypt, away from the death wish of the wicked Herod. But notice the tension here is caused by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party.

The tension within each set of these two is minimal at worst. The reason being is they faithfully serve God's purpose. Each one of them. All across the board. So when two of them come together and share time on the world stage of salvation, they are grounded in God's purpose and calling. They embrace God's expectations of them as individuals chosen to serve a particular purpose. So that when two singles work as a team, the grace and enlightenment of their hearts and souls is powerful indeed. Success is virtually guaranteed as a result of influence from above, affecting what takes place here below.

This week, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, our lives are centered on the team of John the Baptist and Jesus. Even though the Gospel stops right before their meeting on the banks of the River Jordan, John possesses an understanding of himself that will move the process of eternal salvation from one spot prior to meeting Jesus, to another greater spot after their encounter.

In essence, what John speaks and does on the banks of the Jordan is that he sets up our salvation for the One who will offer it to us. John's proclamation of "one mightier than I is coming after me" establishes a perfect working relationship with Jesus. So that when Jesus appears in front of the Baptizer, their coming together will bring all of us one giant step closer to our eternal promise. To our eternal home.

John the Baptist gives us a most excellent example of how we are invited into relationship with the Lord. It's a perfect example that John provides that opens the door on how to spiritually prepare for the coming of Jesus' birth.

"One mightier than I is coming after me." Yes, he's coming *after* me. He's

chasing us. And when we acknowledge his might and power, freely given to us, we establish an effective team. And an **affective** team. A team with affection for one another. There will always be kinks to work out, thanks to our shortcomings. But humbling ourselves before Jesus, and before Jesus arrives in a manger, sets the table for an effective team relationship that will produce some impressive results. Thank you John the Baptist.

And there's another duo that's mentioned in the Gospel I briefly touch on. It's the duo of water and the Holy Spirit. John's baptism at the Jordan is a baptism of water only. A baptism given as the people acknowledge their sins, which the Gospel tells us.

But Jesus' baptism, being baptized into Christ, fulfills the sacramental experience in and through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus brings a whole new explicitly divine dimension to baptism. Yet, as our faith teaches us, even baptism itself as a sacrament is fulfilled in the Sacrament of Confirmation, where the fullness of the Spirit is received. This is why it's so important our teenagers receive Confirmation. In today's world, they need all the help they can get.

What the duo of water and Spirit, given to us by John and Jesus, does for us is that it incorporates us into the fullness of Christ. Our relationship with the Lord is never meant to be some halfway, "maybe I'll see you tomorrow" type of relationship. This relationship is an "I will be with you until the end of time" type of relationship. It's not part time, but full time, meaning eternal.

Remember, Jesus does nothing halfway. All is complete in him. So he takes the water of John, teams it with the Holy Spirit, and says 'Follow me.'

In the combination of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, we are led toward a complete relationship in God. May we learn from the Baptist and welcome Jesus as our constant, "mightier than I" companion on the journey.