

Homily for  
The Third Sunday of Advent  
Sunday December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008

***“It’s Never About Us”***

A couple of years ago, in Baton Rouge, I celebrated the funeral of a good friend of mine. He died young, at the age of 50, and he died suddenly. He was, as they say of some, the “picture of perfect health.” His name was Walter. As you can imagine, this was a profoundly sad experience in our lives. At the same time, though, as I walked around through the hundreds of visitors on the night before his funeral Mass, I was overwhelmed by the kind words that were being spoken about Walter. One of the statements that I heard over and over again was this one: ***“for Walter, it was never about him. It was always about you.”*** Whenever and wherever Walter found himself with friends, family, or co-workers, he was always in the habit of drawing the attention off of himself and back onto the other person. Whether it was on the golf course playing the game he loved so much with his friends or at work or with his children, Walter always made it his choice, his earnest effort to make it about you. It was never about him.

I think of Walter today because of the Gospel reading that we just heard. John the Baptist came on the scene preaching, as scripture says, ***“a Gospel of repentance.”*** And the very first thing that he did was to draw the attention, the spotlight, if you will, away from himself. It was never about him, and he knew. The words that he used to express this were these: ***“I am not he who is to come. The one who is to come after me? I am not even worthy to get down on the ground and untie the straps of his sandals.”***

You and I all know that we can often learn from each other. This never ceases to amaze me, especially the fact that we can learn so much from our children. A few days ago I was having a conversation with a high school student, and we were talking about many things. At one point, we were talking about sin, and he said to me, ***“you know, Father, I think when we sin, we let something else take the place of God.”*** I was completely blown away by the insight of that young man. I responded, ***“man, you are wise beyond your years.”***

If John the Baptist had wanted to, he could have easily let himself take the place of God. He could have easily let his sudden fame take control. Or power. Or popularity. But he didn't. He knew that it was never about him.

That's the question that I would invite all of us to reflect on today: do we ever let ourselves, or some other person, or some other thing take the place of God? Even if it's just for a brief moment. This can be a hard question, because we can kid ourselves into thinking that God is at the exact center of our lives, when in fact, He's anywhere from a little off-center, to way out on the fringe. We can easily allow "things" to take the place of God. We can easily fall into the rut of "things" and even other people getting the spotlight, getting out energy, getting our time:

The lesser things, such as:

- 1. Gossip**
- 2. Acceptance and Popularity**
- 3. Lying**
- 4. Material Items**

The most serious things, such as:

- 5. Substance Misuse or abuse**
- 6. Unhealthy sexual behavior**
- 7. Addiction**
- 8. Money—and the drive to make more of it**

It is very easy for us to put God "on hold" and at times not even realize it. It is very easy to move God from the center of our lives to the outer edges, where we say, "*Lord, I'll get back to you in a minute.*"

We live in a world of electronic devices. We live in a world of athletics and time-keeping. And we're all familiar with the concept of "*resetting the clock or*

*resetting the device.*” Advent can be a time when we “reset” our relationship with God, if we want to.

If you feel that you need to “reset” your relationship with God in some way, if you feel that you need to allow Christ to take more of a center-stage in your life, then just do it. In doing so, we make the statement, *“it’s all about you, Lord. It was never suppose to be about me.”*