

St Pius & St Anthony Homily 2nd Sunday Ordinary Year B

I love John the Baptist: He is so good at his calling-job. He is always doing what God called him to do –and what is that but, identifying and helping others get to Jesus. He will die off even, sending people to Jesus, as we hear even when he is in prison he sends over some more hangers-on of his own disciples. He knows that once they encounter Christ, they will stay with Him-again that is John's job: Bringing people to Jesus sending them to him, always pointing him out. That is John. And really, he actually, 'points' Jesus out. As we hear today, John sees Jesus in crowd and says "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36- had done earlier in 1:29). There He is, follow Him. A lot of the great Renaissance (1500s) Italians painters depict John the Baptist always pointing, many times 'pointing up' as if he is using sign language to say, 'that 's where we are going right?" He gets us thinking about what's next – how's our life-how much repenting we need to do. And he is focusing us 'upward' (like Colossians 3:1 'seek what is above'), but John only points upward when there is no Jesus figure in the painting. I think some of the cutest paintings (Raphael-Leonardo did one) where the child Jesus is on the lap of the blessed Mother, and little John is standing beside her leg and John is pointing up at the baby Jesus. Like even when they played as babies together, John always deferred to Jesus pointed him out... So I love about John that he even ***worked as a child*** fulfilling his calling; another great example of this is when he even works in the womb. Remember the story of the Mary's Visitation to Elizabeth (Luke 1:41, 44). When Mary crosses the threshold of Zechariah and Elizabeth's house, it says the child John leapt in the womb of Elizabeth at the sound of Mary's voice. That was even littler John saying to Elizabeth, he is the one! We are in the presence of the Messiah! I suggest that what Elisabeth interprets as a kick (now, I've never bore a child within) but I'm thinking that what she feels as a kick, may be John pointing even in womb (pushing the wall in Jesus' direction). This makes John a model disciple of Jesus 'in utero' before and as Jesus appears. I believe all disciples' job is to help make introductions of others to Jesus; much like we see Andrew doing in the gospel today when he goes off and gets his big brother Peter and takes him to meet Jesus. That is

being a disciple to future disciples, or as will later be said even of Mary Magdalene, that she was a n ‘apostle to the apostles’ by her humble accommodation/hospitality –helping others meet and be with their Lord. Philip (John 1:45-46) will do this in just a minute later in this first chapter of John, when he goes and gets Nathaniel and brings him to meet Jesus. I think today’s gospel reminds us to reflect upon how a disciple’s job is to help others meet Jesus. In a way, that is what wise Eli is doing for Samuel in the first reading today by redirecting Samuel to listen closer to his heart-vision and answer God directly when he hears his name called again. And Samuel will answer and be great prophet, and Eli in the back ground who helped Samuel say ‘yes’ and enter closer relationship to God. The bible is full of such ***discipleship assists!*** I think that makes a good comparison: lest someone think I was a little hard on sports last weekend when I talked about boxing and overall violence in sports, I want to emphasize today how many great illustrations come from sports that can help us be better disciples of Jesus. Again, the best disciple of Jesus isn’t seen, he/she isn’t in it for their own promotion, the best disciple knows they are on a team – serving greater purpose than their own glory; so the best players are those who like in basketball can wrack up the highest number of ***assists*** (passes to others for goals made) or in baseball the batters with the most number of RBI’s ‘runs batted in’, they may be tagged out at first or distract an outfielder sneaking another base that they have no chance of making but it will send to home plate the runner on third. That player may want the pleasure of scoring himself, but can give for the team to send on another runner to put another number on the board for them all. Or sticking with baseball how about a batter who sacrifice bunts to advance runners. These moves/plays are like John who as a good disciple helps the others along; all for the purpose of having the most number of people possible to meet Jesus.

But that is Christian discipleship (John displays it best today) he points out the greater one-Jesus, and send his disciples to stay with Him. So may we be like John and be good disciples who also work to help more and more people to encounter and know our Messiah Jesus. Maybe we don’t think of ourselves as ‘disciples’, kind of like people don’t think of themselves

as missionaries unless they travel to far off lands, but we are disciples, and every day we have many opportunities to bring Jesus to them or them to Jesus by our interactions with them. Again we bear His name, called Christians, so is what we do 'Christian'? Reflecting on whether I am a good disciple like John or not, makes me think of the church sign I once saw that said "Remember that you may be the only Jesus some people ever meet." So I have to ask myself, "Is what I do helping others to meet and know Christ better- Is my interaction with them I drawing others closer to Christ or drawing them away from Him?"