

## Father Dave's Weekly Homily

12/11/11 ..... 3 Advent B

*John was not the Light, but came to testify to the Light.*

-- Just recently the noted evangelist Billy Graham was admitted to the hospital. That's not an uncommon thing for a man nearly 93 years old. He has been saying lately that he is ready to go home, and for him that means his heavenly home. In fact, he wrote a small book this past year entitled *Nearing Home*.

-- He comes to my mind as I read this passage in John's gospel about John the Baptist. Billy Graham has lived in a very different time and in a very different lifestyle and appearance than the Baptist.

--Both of them, though, focused their lives, on Jesus, the true light of the world. It wasn't about them, but it was all about leading people to Jesus Christ. Mother Teresa also comes to mind as a good example of someone with this same attitude.

-- No matter how much notoriety these messengers of God gained, it did not go to their heads. Unfortunately, we can't say the same about some other public leaders and preachers in Christianity. In some cases, it seems their personal agenda is more important than the good news of Jesus Christ.

-- People don't have to be national or international religious figures to fall to that temptation. It can happen on a local level, with pastors of local parishes and congregations.

-- Peter Feldmeier, who is the new professor of Catholic Studies at UT, recently remarked that too many parishes think their particular pastor is indispensable, as if they just could not survive without him.

-- He is suspicious that, in many of those cases, such pastors fail to empower parishioners to do the work they should be doing. God's work is not about one personality or another. It must be done by all God's people.

-- Christ is the true focus of our faith. Jesus Christ and his coming is the focus of the Advent season. It's not about our personal agendas for the holiday, who we will buy for, what food we will fix and who to invite or not to invite to our parties.

-- We don't have to be religious leaders to fall prey to the temptation to use the things of God for our own self-glorification. John the Baptist teaches us that we can only experience the light of Christ when we turn our lives over to him.

-- We are called to believe in Jesus Christ. This doesn't simply mean professing with our mouths that he is the Son of God. It means placing our lives under the reign of God. It means asking ourselves each day how what we are doing either contributes to or hinders God's work on earth.

-- And it means adjusting our behavior accordingly. That is what conversion and repentance are all about. That is the true meaning of following the light which is Jesus himself.

-- Billy Graham spoke a lot of words trying to bring people to Christ. But he spoke even more by his lifestyle, by his charitable heart and by his openness to all sorts of people. Would that we could say the same about all preachers.

-- Can we say something similar about how we conduct our lives with those who know us? Does the light of Christ shine through our lives?