

Light for Future Generations
Homily of December 12, 2004
by Father Jim McGee

Last Wed, Dec 8th, at age 32, Mia Hamm officially took to the field for the last time to help the US claim a 5-0 win over Mexico.

Mia Hamm ended her 18 year career as the most prolific scorer - male or female - in international soccer with 158 goals in 276 games for the US. She was twice named the women's international soccer player of the year and won the World Cup in 1991 and 1999 and 2 Olympic gold medals.

Certainly we recognize her dedication to hard work and her superb skills that would make such personal success possible. But Mia Hamm's achievement would not have been possible without others who preceded her in women's sports.

In 1998 a remarkable woman died: Helen Candaele St. Aubin. Helen Candaele St. Aubin had often been referred to as the "Ted Williams of Women's Baseball."

She was the character portrayed by Geena Davis in the hit movie, *A League of Their Own*.

We remember her not only for her brief national "star" baseball status but also because of her dream that women's sports would one day blossom into a legitimately financed enterprise in educational and professional circles.

I mention Helen Candaele St. Aubin today because she mirrors for me the experience of John the Baptist. In today's Gospel, we have just heard that John the Baptist had been imprisoned. He is imprisoned by King Herod because John had publicly spoken out against the adultery of the king who had married his own brother's wife.

John had been preaching "reform and repentance" for personal and social sin in anticipation of the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. With imprisonment, we know that he will never experience first hand the very thing to which he devoted his life. He will be beheaded just a short time before the magnificent expression of God's love that unfolds in the life, death, and resurrection of his own cousin, Jesus of Nazareth.

In that sense Helen Candaele St. Aubin was like John the Baptist. She had only a glimpse of her dream come true.

Because of WWII and the suspension of male professional baseball, she would play professional ball herself. But despite the solid popularity that grew with the women's baseball league, once the war ended, men assumed the traditional roles and men's teams received all the financing... and so the women's league shortly folded.

Although Helen's particular role in her dream died, her dream did not.

Despite the fickleness of financial backers and baseball marketing promoters, she did not turn away from her dream.

Helen Candaele St. Aubin continued to work for 30 years for the right of females to have access to the same kind of financial support as males receive for school sports – a dream of justice still waiting to be fully realized.

She was instrumental in the creation of Title IX of the US Educational Amendments of 1972. Title IX is the landmark legislation that bans sex discrimination in federally supported schools, whether it be in academics or athletics.

John the Baptist, Helen Candaele St Aubin – are heroes for us.

They are heroes not because they achieved their dreams but because they remained faithful to their dreams, even without their personal long-term success they had hoped for.

They would fight in their own ways to give their descendents an eternal savoring of something of which they only had a small taste.

They are people who saw the bigger picture – they saw their lives as a witness for future generations.

They worked to change systems, not just their own personal lives.

While we celebrate Mia Hamm's great career, with our memory of her must come our thanksgiving for the people of vision who opened the door for her. As people of faith, with our remembrance comes a challenge – for us to remain faithful to the virtues of equality and justice, and to work for our dreams that manifest these virtues.

We may not see the fruition of our work in our lifetime, but if we believe that those virtues will one day reign as Jesus promised, how can we not rededicate our commitment to equality and equal opportunity within all our relationships?

If we believe that those virtues will one day reign as Jesus promised, how can we not dream again and unfold God's vision for our world?

For one day... ..the desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. ...the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. ...they will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; they will meet with joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning will flee.