

## **2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORD TIME – YEAR A – JAN 18 2026**

**Is 49:3, 5-6; I Cor 1:1-3; Jn 1:29-34**

### **READINGS EXPLAINED**

Welcome back to Ordinary Time, the longest of the Church Seasons, 33 weeks! It starts at the end of the Christmas season and runs through Ash Wednesday, then returns after Pentecost all the way to the first Sunday of Advent. It's the time when we aren't focused on Christ's birth and death or the beginnings of the church. What's special about this season is that it's, well, ordinary. But good old Ordinary Time is when we cover most of the story of Jesus' life, preaching, parables, miracles – his day-to-day struggles and successes.

**Introduction:** The central theme of today's readings is a challenge to live like the Lamb of God and to die like the Lamb of God. In both the first and second readings God calls individuals to His service. The Gospel passage presents three themes, namely,

- John the Baptist's witness to Jesus,
- Jesus' revelation (epiphany) and identification as the "Lamb of God,"
- and the call to discipleship.

Those who are called gradually accept the identity of the One who calls them. Like John the Evangelist, we may choose to accept today's Gospel as a personal and corporate call to become witnesses to the Lamb of God.

**Scripture readings explained: The first reading (Is 49:3, 5-6):** Bible Scholars have called this and three similar passages from this section of Isaiah (chapters 40-55), the "*Songs of the Suffering Servant*." Today's selection is from the second Servant Song. In the original author's mind, the servant was probably a figure for the people of Israel, or for a faithful remnant within the people. In today's passage the servant is called from the womb and commissioned to bring salvation to the nations. The Evangelists of the New Testament use the figure of the servant to explain the mission of Jesus. Isiah also prophesies that the Chosen People will be brought back from Babylonian slavery and gathered together, and made glorious by God's strength. They shall be a light to the nations, so that God's salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. The Gospels clearly show that the "suffering servant" is Jesus. The early Church saw aspects of Jesus' own life as sacrificial lamb and mission of universal salvation foreshadowed in the *Servant Songs*, and the Church

today refers to all of them throughout the liturgical year. Jesus was consecrated and commissioned to engage in a ministry of universal salvation.

- As God formed Isaiah from his mother's womb as His prophet and a "light to the nations," we too are called by our baptism to be that same "light to the nations," revealing the Christ. Being born again in water and the Holy Spirit gives us Jesus' mission of being the "light of the world."

**The second reading is** the beginning of Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, with heading, inside address, and salutation, all in sentence form. The letter is for all the members of the Church in Corinth. Corinth was a bawdy seaport in cosmopolitan Greece. The vices of every seaport, plus the philosophical ferment of ancient Greece, were part of these peoples' lives and gave rise, in part, to the need for this letter. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are "sanctified and called to be holy," like all who call on the name of Jesus in Faith. They are called by God and consecrated in Christ Jesus for a life of holiness and service. By virtue of their Baptism into Christ Jesus, believers become members of his Body. They are not alone—they are called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, that same Lord Jesus is the Lord of those other Churches as well. As people who are baptized into Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit, they, and we, share the vocation of Israel and the Church.

- So we are all meant to serve as "a light to the nations," with Jesus, God's "Suffering Servant."

**Gospel exegesis:** While the call and consecration of John the Baptist by God commissioned him for the important ministry of becoming the *precursor of Jesus*, it was Jesus who was consecrated, and commissioned to bring *salvation* to the world. As precursor of Jesus, John gives testimony to Jesus in today's Gospel. A testimony can be a statement of a truth about something or someone, or a public expression of a religious experience. John the Baptist gives testimony to Jesus by pointing out that he is the *Lamb of God* (vv 29, 36); *a man who was before me* (v 30); *the One on Whom the Holy Spirit remained* (v 33); and *the Son of God* (v 34). John's disciples call Jesus, "Rabbi" (vs. 38). Andrew calls him the *Messiah* (v 41), and Nathaniel calls Jesus *Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel* (vs. 49). Jesus completes the Christology with his own declaration that he is the *Son of Man* (vs. 51).

**The Lamb of God:** John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the Jews as the “Lamb of God” on the second day (Jn 1:29). He repeats it on the third day. "Lamb of God" is the most meaningful title given to Jesus in the Bible. It is used 29 times in the book of Revelation. It sums up the love, the sacrifice and the triumph of Christ. John’s introduction probably brought five pictures of the “lamb” to the minds of his Jewish listeners.

- 1) The Lamb of Atonement** (Lv 16:20-22). A lamb was brought to the Temple on the Day of Atonement. Placing his hands over its head, the high priest transferred all the sins of his people onto the animal. It was then sent into the forest to be killed by some wild animal.
- 2) The Lamb of Daily Atonement** (Ex 29:38-42; Nm 28:1-8). This was the lamb sacrificed on the “Black Altar” of the Temple every morning and evening to atone for the sins of the Jews.
- 3) The Paschal Lamb** (Ex. 12:11ss), whose blood saved the first born of the Jewish families in Egypt from the Angel of destruction. This lamb reminded them also of the Paschal Lamb which they killed every year on the Passover Feast.
- 4) The Lamb of the Prophets** which portrayed One who, by His sacrifice, will redeem his people: “The gentle lamb led to the slaughterhouse” (Jer 11:19), “like a lamb to the slaughter” (Is 53:7). Both refer to the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ.
- 5) The Lamb of the Conquerors**. This was the picture of a horned lamb on the Jewish flag at the time of Maccabaean liberation war, used as a sign of conquering majesty and power. The great Jewish conquerors like Samuel, David and Solomon were described by the ancient Jewish historians as “horned lambs.”

Christ as Lamb of God is a title familiar to us. In the Eucharist, at "the breaking of the bread" we proclaim in word or song what the Baptist said. Our traditional fraction anthem is the *Agnus Dei* – “*Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us/grant us peace.*” In this prayer we give expression to our deepest understanding of the identity and purpose of Jesus Christ as our Lamb and Lord. By His life of love and sacrifice, we believe and affirm that He is the One Who came, and continues to come, into a broken world to take our sins upon Himself.

**Life messages: 1) We need to live and die like the Lamb of God.**

**(A) Live like a lamb**

- leading pure, innocent, humble, selfless lives obeying the Christ's commandment of love;
- appreciating the loving providence and protecting care of the Good Shepherd in His Church;
- eating the Body and drinking the Blood of the Good Shepherd; and iv) deriving spiritual strength from his Holy Spirit through the Sacraments and prayers.

**(B) Die like a sacrificial lamb by:**

- sharing our blessings of health, wealth and talents with others in the family, parish and community;
- bearing witness to Christ in our illness, pain and suffering; iii) offering our suffering for the salvation of souls and as reparation for our sins and those of others.

**2) We need to rebuild broken lives.** Like the missionary call of the servant in Isaiah (Is 49:1-3) and "those called to be saints" in St. Paul's First Letter to the Church in Corinth (1Cor 1:2ff), we are informed that God's call is trustworthy and true. Therefore, we can believe from the depth of our hearts that our God is faithful. Our faithful response to God is to rebuild broken lives, reconciling them with God's love and justice through Christ Jesus our Lamb and Lord. Through Baptism into the Body of Christ, we are empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit to help free and build up the oppressed. Through the love of the Lamb of God, we are called to better the lot and improve the broken spirit, of all who have been exiled from the possibility of hope and from God's righteousness or who are burdened by the yoke of spiritual, social, economic, and political dislocation. In other words, through the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the glorified Lamb, we are called to empower the human spirit with a sense of identity and purpose.

**3) We need to be witnesses to the Lamb of God.** Today's Gospel reminds us that being a disciple of Jesus means that we grow by Faith to become witnesses for Him. And bearing witness to Christ is an active, not passive, lifetime enterprise.

One cannot be a disciple of Jesus at a distance any more than one can be a distant lover. To love Christ is to be drawn close to Him, to know Christ personally, to experience Him through the Bible, prayers and the Sacraments, and to inspire others to want to know Jesus. To help Christ is to share the Good News about Him with others. Blessed are we when we bring to others the gifts of love, peace, justice, tolerance, and mercy, thus becoming witnesses for the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**4) "Come and see".** The essence of our witness-bearing is, first, to state what we have seen and believed and the, to invite others to "come and see." For Andrew and John, Faith begins by responding to Jesus' invitation, "Come and see." Three times Andrew brings someone to Jesus! First, he brings his brother, Simon (1:40), then, a boy with five barley loaves and two fish (6:8); and finally, "some Greeks" (12:20-22), who want to see Jesus, which signals the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified. We tell others about good restaurants, barbers, optometrists, etc. Why isn't there the same fervor over inviting and encouraging people to come and participate in our Church activities? Often, we hesitate to do so because of the false notion that talking about religion is taboo in our culture, or that religion is a private matter and shouldn't be shared with others, or that we don't have much of a personal Faith to share, or that our worship services would not be appealing to others. One of the differences that Faith should make in our lives is the desire that others -- especially those without a religious Faith -- might also share in and benefit from the relationship God offers through Christ. If we are not willing to invite others into this experience, what does that say about our experiences with Christ and with our Church?

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## **HOMILY**

**Introduction:** The central theme of today's readings is a challenge to live like the Lamb of God and to die like the Lamb of God and thus bear witness to Christ the "Lamb of God." We have to choose to accept John's testimony in today's Gospel as a personal and corporate call from God to us to become witnesses to the Lamb of God. (You may add a homily starter anecdote here)

In both the first and second readings, God calls individuals to His service entrusting them with a mission. The first reading is from the “*Songs of the Suffering Servant*” in Isaiah, where the prophet was chosen by God from his mother’s womb and consecrated to be the “light to the nations”. Here, aspects of Jesus’ own life as sacrificial lamb and mission as salvation of the world are foreshadowed.

In the second reading, Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that they are “sanctified and called to be holy” like all who call on the name of Jesus. They are called by God and consecrated in Christ Jesus for a life of holiness and service. As believers, we too have been called by God to become members of Christ’s Body by our Baptism, and we are consecrated in Christ Jesus for a life of holiness and service.

The Gospel passage presents three themes, namely, the witness John the Baptist bears to Jesus, the revelation (epiphany) and identification of Jesus as the “Lamb of God,” and the call to discipleship. John’s first declaration probably brought five pictures of the “lamb” to the minds of his Jewish listeners.

- 1) The Lamb of Yearly Atonement (Lv 16:20-22) used on Yom Kippur.
- 2) The Lamb of Daily Atonement (Ex 29:38-42; Nm 28:1-8).
- 3) The Paschal Lamb (Ex. 12:11ss).
- 4) The Lamb of the Prophets (Jer 11:19), (Is 53:7).
- 5) The Lamb of the Conquerors. (See the “gospel exegesis” for details).

**Life messages: 1) Live and die like the Lamb of God.**

(A) Live like a lamb by:

- i) leading pure, innocent, humble, selfless lives obeying the Christ’s commandment of love;
- ii) appreciating the loving providence and protecting care of the Good Shepherd in His Church;
- iii) eating the Body and drinking the Blood of the Good Shepherd and deriving spiritual strength from the the Holy Spirit through the the Holy Bible, Sacraments and our prayers.

(B) Die like a sacrificial lamb by:

- i) by the sacrificial sharing our blessings of health, wealth and talents with others in the family, parish and community;
- ii) bearing witness to Christ in our illness, pain and suffering;

iii) offering our sufferings for the salvation of souls and as reparation for our sins and those of others.

**2) Be a witness to the Lamb of God by our exemplary life.** Today's Gospel reminds us that being a disciple of Jesus means that we grow by Faith to become witnesses for him. And bearing witness to Christ is an active, not passive, lifetime enterprise. One cannot be a disciple of Jesus at a distance, any more than one can be a distant lover.

**3) "Come and see".** The essence of our witnessing is to state what we have seen and believed and then to invite others to "come and see" our experience of Jesus. As with Andrew and John, Faith begins with our responding to Jesus' invitation to "come and see." We tell others about good restaurants, barbers, optometrists, etc. Why isn't there the same fervor over inviting and encouraging people to come and participate in our Church activities? If we are not willing to invite others into this experience, what does that say about our experiences with Christ and with our Church?

#### **JOKES OF THE WEEK**

Pastor joke: My neighboring pastor put sanitary hot air hand dryers in the rest rooms at his church and after two weeks took them out. I asked him why and he confessed that they worked fine but when he went in there, he saw a sign that read, "For a sample of this week's sermon, push the button."

The future son-in-law: The rich businessman Raymond goes to meet his new son-in-law to be, Ben. He says to Ben, "So, tell me Ben, my boy, what you do?" "I study the Theology," he replies. "But Ben, you are going to marry my daughter! How are going to feed and house her?" "No problem," says Ben, "I study Theology, and it says God will provide." "But you will have children! How will you educate them?" asks Raymond. "No problem," says Ben, "I study Theology, and it says God will provide." When Raymond returns home, his wife anxiously asks him what Ben is like. "Well," says Raymond, "he's a lovely boy. I only just met him, and he already thinks I'm God."