

2nd SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

Isaiah 49:3,5-6 - "...I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth"

1 Corinthians 1:1-3 - "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..."

John 1:29-34 - "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ..."

INTRODUCTION

Today, we step into the liturgical season of the second Sunday of Ordinary Time. We begin the exploration of Jesus' public life. In the gospel reading for today, John the Baptist observes Jesus passing by and proclaims, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" He emphatically declares, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John the Baptist boldly introduces Jesus, clarifying His identity and mission. He also recounts seeing the Spirit descend upon Jesus. This sign led John to understand that Jesus was the one who would come after him.

Through our Baptism, we are invited to make Jesus known to the world through our words and the testimony of our lives... An ideal parish reflects the witness of the early Christians, living in profound respect, love, and unity with one another. Brothers and sisters, let us reflect: are we able to recognize the uniqueness in each other? Do we draw others to Jesus, or merely to ourselves? May the Lord bless you with the grace to honor the uniqueness of others as God made them to be.

N.B:

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: This year we observe the Christian Unity week from Sunday Jan 18, 2026 – Sunday Jan 25, 2026. This week of prayer for Christian unity was recognized in the Catholic Church by Pope Benedict XV in 1916. Catholic Church's modern ecumenical movement began with the Second Vatican Council in 1960, now called the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity. "Ecumenism" aims to promote cooperation and unity among Christian churches. Ecumenical dialogue serves to overcome the scandal of divided Christianity and fulfill Christ's will for unity.

HOMILY

(Extracted and edited, meditated and added by Fr. Hrudaya Gade)

Theme: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ..."

Point of Focus: Welcoming Jesus to take away the sin of the World

Takeaway: Seeing and Acknowledging the Uniqueness of others

The End is in the Beginning

At the very beginning, in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we hear John the Baptist, introducing Jesus to the world, exclaiming: "Behold, the lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world!" This illustrates a particular style of storytelling. It serves as a way to kick off the narrative. T.S. Eliot referred

to it as a narration where "The end is in the beginning." It is logical that the beginning of a story holds immense significance, as it establishes the framework for the entire narrative and is crucial for engaging the audience. The opening of the story often reveals the central issue or conflict that will drive the plot. This style of narration leads the audience to anticipate that the scenes will ultimately culminate in something significant. Thus, John the Baptist's portrayal of Jesus as "the Lamb of God" is a well-founded image that speaks volumes about both the journey of Jesus and His destination at the end of the story.

John introduces "the Lamb of God" to the World

The gospel today provides the Christian community of that time with a stronger faith in Jesus and a clearer understanding of the kind of Messiah that was to be accepted by the people. When John saw Jesus approaching, he pointed and exclaimed, "Behold!" which means 'Look!' This clearly indicates that John the Baptist had a profound understanding of Jesus' true identity, particularly by referring to Him as the lamb. John the Baptist sought to clarify the difference between himself and the Savior, whose role was to prepare the way of the people to receive the Savior.

When John sees Jesus approaching, he points to Him as 'the Lamb of God', not just a lamb. By stating that Jesus is 'the lamb of God,' John emphasizes that Jesus is the Lamb from heaven, the one sent by God. Furthermore, John does not say, 'Behold, the Messiah,' nor does he say, 'Behold, the Son of God.' He specifically says, 'Behold, the Lamb of God.' By this phrase, John intends for us to focus on the representation of Jesus as the Lamb of God to guide his narrative to the climax of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross as the Lamb. Thus, he wants us to understand the ultimate aim and mission of the Messiah, what He has come to accomplish, and the practical ways in which He will achieve it.

The Imagery of the lamb from the Old Testament

The image of the lamb is rooted in biblical tradition. This term, which John employs, traces back to numerous stories in the Old Testament. Since 1500 years in Jewish religion, the lambs were have been offered as sacrifices for the expiation of sins. John would have certainly been alluding to the paschal lamb in chapter 12 of the Book of Exodus, which effectively saved the Israelites from death before their flight from slavery in Egypt. Furthermore, John would have been invoking the narrative of Abraham's sacrificing of his son, Isaac, in chapter 22 of the Book of Genesis, where God provided a lamb for sacrifice, thereby saving Isaac from death. The Baptist, who had been diligently preparing to proclaim the Messiah's coming, would have had these scriptural accounts and the words of prophets in mind when he referred to Jesus as 'the Lamb of God.'

Nevertheless, this new Lamb of God would accomplish much more. He would deliver the people from the sin of the world, which includes all the wrongs and godlessness of humanity, starting with the original sin of Adam and Eve. He would liberate the world from the shackles of sin and the dread of eternal death. John, thus, carries forward this concept in his book of Revelation, where he

concludes the story of Adam and Eve's fall conclusively saying, "They (angels) triumphed over him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev 12:11)... and "No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him" (Rev 22:3).

It is crucial for us to pay attention to John's vision. Often, we impose limits on the size of God's love. We think that God is only interested in saving only a group of people, just as the Israelites expected the Savior to be only for them. Sometimes, we think that God is only about saving our families and friends or those who share our nationality. However, God is much greater than that. God's love and salvation reaches out to all people. It removes the sins of the whole world. God's plan is much broader and more comprehensive. God's love is for everyone, in every nation on this earth.

How can the Messiah, the Lamb of God, Save you and me now?

If you travel into the North African desert or the swamps in North America, like the Florida Everglades or Michigan's inland lakes, you can find quicksand. These areas are sometimes known as sinkholes. There is no solid base at the bottom of these sinkholes. Once you step into one, you start sinking immediately, and the more you try to escape, the more it pulls you down until you are under the sand and you suffocate and die.

Many individuals find themselves trapped in sinkholes of lethal habitual sins. They are being drawn into various addictions and harmful habits. They get stuck in repetitive behavior patterns. These unfortunate individuals feel unable to stop. The only way to escape quicksand or a sinkhole is to reach up and take the hand of someone who is on solid, firm ground. One cannot free oneself by oneself. The solution lies in one's willingness to ask for help. It is a false belief that you can save yourself saying, "I can handle my own issues," some might say, "I know what to do and don't need anyone's advice." "I don't have a real problem; I don't need help from anyone." "You don't understand what's happening in my life." Such individuals struggle even more and continue to drown in their own quicksand-filled sinkholes. One must hold onto Jesus' outstretched hand to escape the self-inflicted quicksand that drowns one to death.

Think back to when Peter was sinking while trying to walk on water towards Jesus. He called out, "Lord, save me!" and Jesus immediately reached out to help him out (Mt 14:28-33). When you comprehend the idea of being saved, you will start to realize the person of Jesus, and appreciate Jesus more referred to as "the Lamb of God." Martin Luther explained it like this: "Either sin is with you, lying on your shoulders, or it is lying on Christ, the Lamb of God. If it is on your back, you are lost; but if it is on Christ, you are free, and you will be saved. Now make your choice" (Martin Luther, "What Luther says: an anthology", 1959).

How can we Help others to let the Lamb of God Save them?

As Christians, we are called to emulate the love of Jesus and to live with a sacrificial and divine love. But how do we do that? Let me share a real-life story.

He was eight years old, in a hospital room, waiting for a serious surgery. He was filled with fear. He asked his doctor, "What is it like to die?" The doctor reassured him, saying, "You're not going to die, so don't worry." The nurses and medical staff told him there was nothing to fear and encouraged him to dismiss his worries. Yet, no one discussed death with him, leaving him still afraid. One night, a woman from the cleaning staff came in to mop the floor. The boy asked her, "Are you scared of dying?" "Yes, I am," she answered, putting down her mop and sitting next to him. "I am afraid, but I trust that Jesus is with me." She spoke to him as an equal, not as someone superior. She shared her faith in God and the comfort she found in Jesus' words. They talked for a while, and when she left, he felt at peace because someone had listened to his fears. When we take the opportunities that come our way, Christ continues to save the world through us. What the world needs is not people who highlight its sins, but those who reveal the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. I believe that priests in the Church have this mission more than anyone else...

Seeing and Receiving the Lamb of God at the Holy Mass

Today's Gospel leads us to a deep insight into what we are witnessing and whom we are receiving during the Holy Mass. "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world...", the priest says just before we partake in the Eucharist. At the Last Supper, Jesus provided us with His Body and Blood, stating that this is His Body given for us and this is His Blood shed for us. So, when we receive the Eucharist, we accept the gift of the Lamb of God, the Salvation, of the One who sacrificed Himself for us. He is the Messiah. Indeed, He is the Lamb of God who removes the sins of the world. And He is the Lamb of God who saves you and me, and everyone.

Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Jesus, our Savior! . AMEN.

PASTORS PONDERING - FR. HRUDAYA GADE

The Theology of "the Lamb of God" in the Catechism

CCC 604: By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins." God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

CCC 608: After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover. Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

CCC 610" Jesus gave the supreme expression of his free offering of himself at the meal shared with the twelve Apostles "on the night he was betrayed". On the eve

of his Passion, while still free, Jesus transformed this Last Supper with the apostles into the memorial of his voluntary offering to the Father for the salvation of men: "This is my body which is given for you." "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

CCC 613: Christ's death is both the Paschal sacrifice that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", and the sacrifice of the New Covenant, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the "blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".

CCC 616: It is love "to the end" that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died." No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all.

CCC 617: The Council of Trent emphasizes the unique character of Christ's sacrifice as "the source of eternal salvation" and teaches that "his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us." And the Church venerates his cross as she sings: "Hail, O Cross, our only hope."

The Overall Message of John the Baptist

When we examine the teachings and overall message of John the Baptist, several important messages stand out for Christians. In summary, John consistently reminds us that we Christians should always exercise metanoia, koinonia, diakonia, and kerygma in our everyday lives:

Metanoia: Conversion is a continuous process. We are never finished products. We are saints in the making always. We should be ready for conversion at any time in our lives. We must persevere in holiness with humility, simplicity, clarity and purity.

Koinonia (fellowship, communion): We require fellowship and communion. We need prayer. We need a community that can support and sustain us. We must accept help from others.

Diakonia: Without service or apostolate, the light of faith soon extinguishes. Our prayer life should lead us to true service, and our service should guide us to deeper prayer.

Kerygma (proclamation): The life of a Christian is a call for the proclamation of faith, expressed not merely through words but through personal testimony. The Christian's role is to proclaim and direct attention to Someone far greater than oneself, that is Jesus Christ. Just like John the Baptist, we also need to say to the world, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"