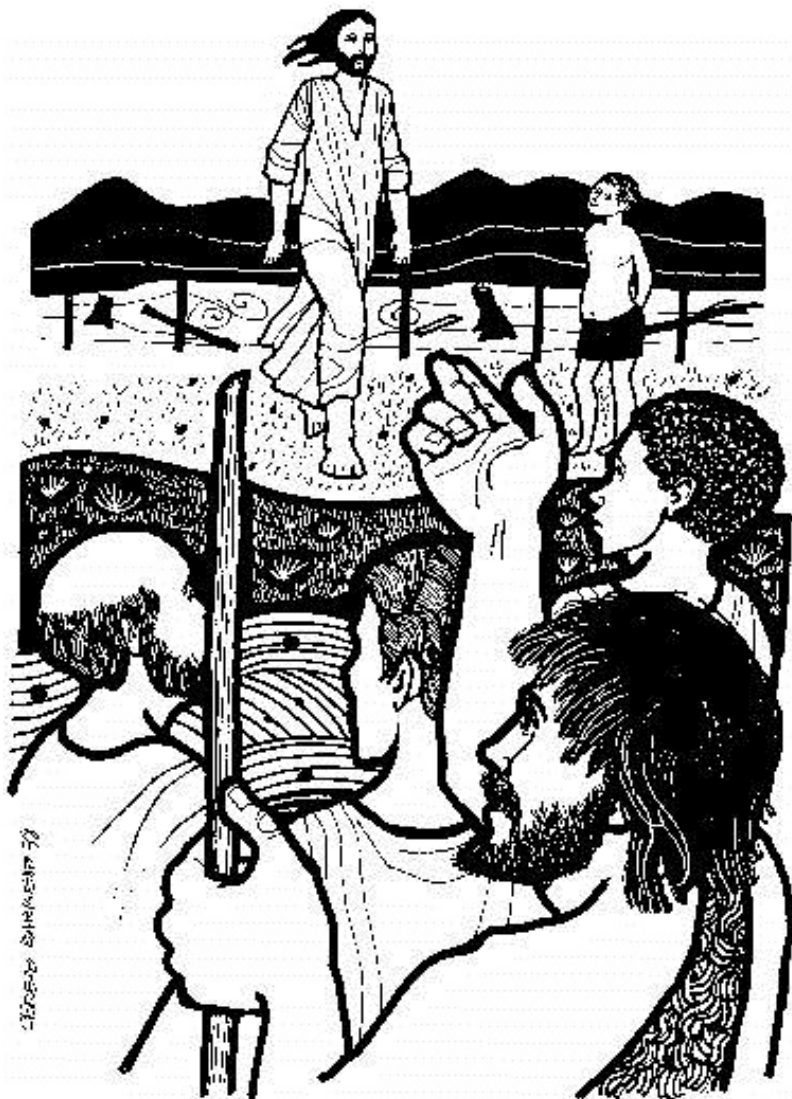


Commentary to the 2nd Sunday Ordinary Time (A)



The poinsettias are gone, the lights are down, the Christmas season is over. Now we move on with the very beginning of Jesus' public life, usually referred to as his ministry. We come upon John the Baptist seeing Jesus and pointing to him. "This is the Lamb of God", he says.

"Lamb of God." We use that term so often, that it is easy for us to overlook the deep theology and the tremendous love of our God contained in his sending his Son to be the Lamb.

The first place we come upon the concept of the Lamb of God is in the 53rd chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Although this was written six hundred years before Jesus, it describes the feelings of God's people as they look at Jesus on the cross. It's short, so let me quote it:

Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

He grew up like a sapling before him, like a shoot from the parched earth; There was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him, nor appearance that would attract us to him.

He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, One of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem.

Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, While we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed.

We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; But the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all.

Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; Like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth.

He is wounded for our sins, bruised for our iniquities. He has taken upon himself the chastisement that makes us whole. That is how John the Baptist views Jesus when he says, "Look, there is the Lamb of God."

The question comes: why? Why did the world need a Savior? Why did God's son become a man to suffer and die for us? Did the Word have to become Flesh? Was Christmas necessary? Well, we can't tell God what he can and can't do, or what is necessary or not necessary. But we can consider this: From the very beginning of the world, all creation was entrusted to human beings. But man, in his selfishness and self centeredness, perverted the whole purpose for creation. Instead of glorifying God, creation was to be used to satisfy man's selfish needs. But even with this, God still did not take the gift of creation away from man. A man would once more restore creation to God's original plan. Jesus Christ is this man.

Perhaps this would be clearer if I present it this way: Mankind's sin was that he was so wrapped up in himself that he had no room for God. He forced the good things of the world to be an end for his selfishness rather than a means of glorifying God. This is how man perverted God's purpose for creation. As long as man lived like this, true love could not exist in the world. People could not give themselves to others or to another because their only concept of life was to take, not to give. Life, therefore, was meaningless and frustrating.

Jesus came to live as the Father wants us all to live. He sacrificed himself completely for others so that we could experience sacrificial love. He called us to use creation as the Father meant creation to be used. God's plan for mankind could once more be put into effect since the Son of God became a man. Still entrusted with creation, a man restores the world.

In the visions of the fifth chapter of the Book of Revelation a book is brought out sealed with seven seals. The book is God's plan for mankind. But the plan is sealed. "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?", a voice cries out. But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to examine it. The visionary sheds many tears because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to examine it. But then one of the elders said, "Do not weep. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed, enabling him to open the scroll with its seven seals." Then the visionary saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders, a Lamb that seemed to have been slain. Only the lamb was worthy to once more restore God's plan for mankind.

And John the Baptist saw Jesus and proclaimed, “Look, there is the Lamb of God. He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” Jesus’s disciples would be given the power of God to transform the world. They would be given the power to create a new world, a world with a new way of living, the way of sacrificial love.

When we say or sing, “Lamb of God” we are remembering what Jesus did for us and what he has empowered us to do for others. We are remembering his sacrifice to make God’s love real on earth. We are reminding ourselves that joining Jesus in sacrificial love is the only way we can be his followers.

John the Baptist found his reason for existence. He was to point out the Lamb of God to the world. His mission is not different from the mission of every Christian. We are to point out the Lamb of God to the world.

There is nothing greater that any of us can do in our lives than point Christ out to others, first to our children who must follow us in pointing to the Lord for others to find him, and then to all who meet us.

John the Baptist was not a typical person of his time. He was extraordinary. When we consider his life, we realize that it was not John’s dress or preaching that made him extraordinary, it was the fact that he found the purpose for his life. He looked to Jesus and said, “There is the Lamb of God.”

We have been called to do the same.

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