

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 1:14a, 12a

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

To those who accepted him, he gave power to become children of God.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 1:29-34; L64A

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

He is the one of whom I said,

‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me

because he existed before me.’

I did not know him,

but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.”

John testified further, saying,

“I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him.

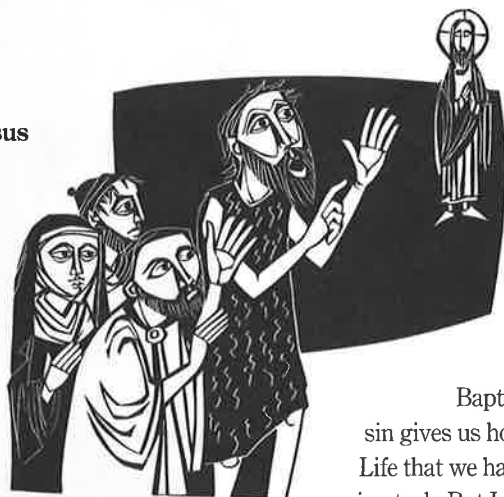
I did not know him,

but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,

‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,

he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’

Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”



Reflecting on the Gospel

Spring, a time when life bursts forth in all its beauty, is a traditional time for lambing. Among some breeds lambing is seasonal: impregnation in the fall, birth in the spring. It is as though sheep instinctively respect spring’s need to be lavish with new life. Spring is the time when grass is plentiful, so feed is plentiful. Twins are the norm—lambs usually come in twos. In this Sunday’s gospel, John calls Jesus “the Lamb of God.” And twins/twos and the promise of new Life abound in this gospel.

John’s prophetic announcement, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” reveals two things about Jesus. He is “the Lamb” who will be sacrificed for the remission of “the sin of the world.” He is “of God” who will “baptize with the Holy Spirit.” This one, seemingly simple phrase “Lamb of God” metaphorically captures the whole saving mystery of Christ. He will be the Lamb who is sacrificed for our salvation. He is “the Son of God” in whom God’s glory shines (see first reading). This “Lamb of God” will give his life so that we might have Life. This “Lamb of God” seeks to twin with us so that we may share in his glory. This “Lamb of God” baptizes us with the Holy Spirit so that we might know him, walk in his ways, and have abundant Life.

Further, the gospel reveals two things about baptism.

Baptism with water washes away our sin. The remission of our sin gives us holiness of life, and demands of us that we live according to the Life that we have been given. On our own, this would be more than a daunting task. But Jesus brought a baptism beyond that of water. He “will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” Through baptism we are “twinning” with the Holy Spirit. Baptism with the Holy Spirit empowers us to come to know who Jesus is. Without the Holy Spirit, we could not know Jesus. Like John, we do not know Jesus—until our baptism initiates us into a lifelong encounter with “the Lamb of God.”

Getting to know Jesus takes a lifetime, because knowing him is not simply an intellectual exercise, a social encounter, or a casual event. As “the Son of God,” Jesus is the very depth of Life itself. He wishes to be known so that we twins of his grow in his holiness, in his glory, in his grace and beauty. Knowing him is more even than lifelong encounter. Knowing and twinning with Jesus means sacrificing ourselves—giving ourselves over to him so that we grow more fully into the Life he offers us. Now and forever.

Living the Paschal Mystery

We live in a society and culture that values quick results. When it comes to what is most important to us—coming to know Jesus—we cannot expect quick results. Learning to know Jesus from the many ways he comes to us requires patient waiting that opens wide our eyes to new possibilities. Knowing Jesus is a lifelong process, and so being baptized into him demands lifelong living. We all probably take two steps forward in our self-giving and then a few steps backward and can get mightily discouraged along the way. We don’t always see Jesus in the person who annoys us or the mundane, everyday tasks that bore us. Yet his Holy Spirit is with us, teaching us how to sacrifice ourselves for the good of others. The Holy Spirit draws us to twin with him and “the Son of God” so that our holiness spills over into life for others. Living Jesus’ mystery of sacrifice and glory is our gift of the new life of spring for the world. There is abundance for all.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: Behold, the Lamb of God; I did not know him; baptize with water; baptize with the Holy Spirit; Now I have seen

To the point: John’s prophetic announcement, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” reveals two things about Jesus. He is “the Lamb” who will be sacrificed for the remission of “the sin of the world.” He is “of God” who will “baptize with the Holy Spirit.” Further, the gospel reveals two things about baptism. Baptism with water washes away our sin. Baptism with the Holy Spirit empowers us to come to know who Jesus is. Like John, we do not know Jesus—until our baptism initiates us into a lifelong encounter with “the Lamb of God.”

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The “light to the nations” who will show forth God’s “salvation . . . to the ends of the earth” is Jesus, “the Lamb of God.”

to experience: Baptism is more than a ritual event. It is a lifelong journey of coming to know “the Lamb of God” and living in his “Holy Spirit.”

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In the first strophe (stanza) of this responsorial psalm we “wait” for the Lord. We keep watch, and we expect. In the final strophe we announce that we have found the Lord. We testify, we proclaim. Like John the Baptist part of our mission as disciples is to keep on the lookout for the appearance of Christ, and then testify to his presence when he does appear. And this is the obedience we sing about in the middle strophes of the psalm.

As we begin once more our discipleship journey through Ordinary Time, we offer ourselves to God as obedient servants (first reading). We set out to find Jesus in every aspect of life. We begin “not knowing” entirely where and how he will appear (gospel). We end meeting him face-to-face, and showing others who he is. The “I” who sings “Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will” (refrain) is not only Jesus, not only John the Baptist, but also we ourselves.

to psalmist preparation: In the context of this Sunday’s readings, doing God’s will means searching for Christ and then announcing his presence to others. As part of your preparation this week, choose a specific place to search for Christ, that is, within your family, in a situation at work, with someone who is suffering, etc., so that the assembly can hear in your voice the testimony of a heart speaking from experience.

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- I behold “the Lamb of God” when . . .
Who helps me behold “the Lamb of God” is . . .
- As I come to know Jesus more deeply, what I say about him is . . .
- Being baptized in the Holy Spirit compels me to . . .

PRESIDERS

Like John the Baptist, I remain faithful in making known “the Lamb of God” by . . .

DEACONS

My service brings others to “Behold, the Lamb of God” when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My manner of greeting those gathering for liturgy is like John the Baptist’s prophetic announcement when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

Like John the Baptist my role is to turn attention away from myself to Jesus (gospel). In the ministry of music this is easy to do when . . . It is difficult to do when . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My serving at the altar requires an attentiveness that leads me to Jesus when I . . .

LECTORS

My proclamation is a prophetic announcement that I have encountered Jesus in my daily living when . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

I see the Spirit of the Lord resting upon each communicant when I . . . when they . . .