

ORDINARY TIME 2 YEAR A

Today we follow on from last week when Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. As described by the Apostle Matthew.

Today's gospel from the Apostle John describes how John the Baptist, on the day following Jesus' baptism, publically identifies Him as the Lamb of God. Another manifestation of Jesus' divinity. John gives witness to the fact that Jesus is the chosen one of God.

Although John is Jesus' cousin he has spent the preceding years in isolation hence his statement "I did not know Him myself" and he goes on to identify Jesus as the one who is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

So today the message is a challenge for each one of us to live like the Lamb of God and to die like the Lamb of God.

Once again we see the prophecies of Isaiah, which comes from the "Songs of the Suffering Servant", contains aspects that we can associate with Jesus' own life and mission

The Gospel passage presents three themes:-

- . John's witness to Jesus
- . Jesus' Epiphany, that is His manifestation as the Lamb of God
- . And the call to discipleship.

Like John the Baptist, we are called to choose to accept today's gospel as a call to become a witness to the Lamb of God.

Sheep and lambs were, of course an integral part of Jewish life and culture, flocks were mainly small groups each tended by a shepherd who was prepared to put their welfare ahead of their own.

Throughout Jewish religious ceremonial the Lamb appears frequently.

1 THE LAMB OF ATONEMENT.

On the day of Atonement a lamb was chosen

The High Priest placing his hands over the head of the lamb transferred all the sins of his people onto the lamb which was then released in the wild to be killed by an animal.

2 THE LAMB OF DAILY ATONEMENT.

This lamb was sacrificed on the “Black Altar” of the temple every morning and evening to atone for the sins of the people.

3 THE PASCAL LAMB.

Prior to the exodus it was the blood of the lamb smeared over the portal that saved the Jews from the Angel of Death. Each year at the celebration of the Passover feast a lamb was sacrificed and consumed by each household(sometimes shared with others).

4 THE LAMB OF THE PROPHETS.

Referred to in scripture who by His sacrifice would redeem the people (Jer 11.19) (Is 53.7)

5 THE LAMB OF THE CONQUERORS

This was the image of a horned lamb on the Jewish flag at the time of the Maccabean liberation war. The great Jewish leaders, Samuel, David, and Solomon were referred to as “horned Lambs”

Jesus as Lamb of God has always been familiar to us as in our traditional fractional anthem we say, “Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us”.

So as I said at the beginning, the challenge for us is that we need to live and die like the Lamb of God. This means living humble, pure and innocent lives, sharing our blessings of health, wealth and talents with others in our families, parish and community.

Today's gospel also reminds us that being a disciple of Jesus means that we grow in faith, to become witnesses for Him in an active lifetime enterprise. We cannot serve Jesus at a distance any more than one can be a distant lover. To serve Christ is to be close to Him, to know Him personally and experience Him through prayer, the sacraments and scripture and most importantly to inspire others to want to know Him.

Our Archbishop Timothy in his vision for the Archdiocese encourages us to do this.

The challenge is there, are we up to it.