

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – January 15, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

The LORD said to me: You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory. Now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, that Jacob may be brought back to him and Israel gathered to him; and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Psalm: Ps 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

R. (8a and 9a) Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.
And he put a new song into my mouth,
a hymn to our God.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Sacrifice or offering you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me,
to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD,
know.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: John 1:29-34

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."



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Among Ignatius of Loyola's prayer methods for a retreat there is a device called "repetition." If a praying session went particularly well, or sometimes if it went badly, Ignatius would instruct the retreatant to repeat the exact same topic for their next session. "*Oh no, not again,*" I would groan when so instructed. This was the method I disliked most when I first made the Spiritual Exercises. Only later did I begin to understand something of what repetition was about. I will attempt to give you a taste of that understanding here. It was not that I should try to experience again the same feelings that I had the first time. Not even that I should try to meet God in the same manner that I did before. Nor to rake my brains more vigorously so I could overwhelm it with brain-power.

Jesus allowed himself be sacrificed on behalf of his people.

Repetition meant that I should go to the same shady spot in the forest, the place where God and I visited each other last time. I go to that area again to see if it is the site where we will meet again. And even if we do not, I might still remember what happened last time, like Mary "pondering these things in her heart" (Lk 2:19), and this might give God a way to find me. I mention this because on Sunday the Church prescribes what is, in effect, a repetition of last week's Baptism of the Lord. Maybe there was some kind of mistake in the ordering of the readings? Or what if this repetition has a purpose.

Let's use a sort of Ignatian method to sort it out. First, what do you notice in the Gospel reading? Pause here if you want to go through that reading again and get your own ideas. Personally I am struck by the words the Baptist spoke when Jesus approached: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." We hear this phrase at every Mass ("This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world") but you and I probably have not thought much about it. Yet it is a mysterious idea, especially if you listen. It is actually quite rich.* In the Jewish temple lambs had their lives taken as "sacrifices." Perhaps it was thought that their innocence could go up to God's pure heaven by this means—making a bridge between God and the people. Jesus allowed himself be sacrificed on behalf of his people. He was already at one with God, as we know, but he was also a (sinless) member of a sinful people. So he carried the plague of their sins before God's bosom. Insofar as the people allowed it, they were forgiven. Can you picture a simple little lamb munching grass in a pasture? Spend time with it. Then see Jesus willing to love us with the same simplicity, unto death, so that he could be our bridge. And that is a repetition. Finding God in a different way in the same place. If you want to go further, consider this: a scholar named Joachim Jeremias held that the original word for "lamb" in Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke) was "*talyā*," which meant not only "lamb" but also "slave" or "servant." Maybe the Baptist intended both meanings!

*Before communion, when we recite the "Lamb of God" instead of singing it, the result is often "LammaGod-youtakeawaythesinsoftheworld-havemercyonus" One word. Once you have imagined the meaning, you will crave slowing it down!

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. What in this famous "servant song" will Jesus proclaim throughout his ministry? Can we be a light for the world? How? Can we be a crack of light in someone's darkness?
2. We are "called to be holy." What does "holy" mean to you? How is John the Baptist a model of holiness? Who is holy in your world? What does s/he do that makes you think that?
3. "Why was John so certain about Jesus when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God"? Was John watching for the Spirit? Do you watch for the Spirit in your life? Can you find and trust this Spirit of God?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty, ever-living God, who governs all things, both in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the pleading of your people and bestow your peace on our times. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.