Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Jn* 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 the sky 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.”

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

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Today we have heard John, who, upon seeing Jesus, says: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (Jn 1:29). What must those people have thought? And what do we understand? In the celebration of the Eucharist, we all pray: “Lamb of God who remove the sins of the world, have mercy on us.” And the priest invites the faithful to Communion saying: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world…”

There is no doubt that when John said, “Behold the Lamb of God,” everyone understood what he meant, since the “lamb” is a messianic image used by the prophets—especially Isaiah—and one that was well known to all faithful Israelites.

Moreover, the lamb is the animal the Israelites sacrificed to commemorate the Passover, the liberation from slavery in Egypt. The Passover meal consists in eating a lamb.

The Apostles and the Fathers of the Church also tell us that the lamb is a sign of purity, simplicity, goodness, gentleness, and innocence… and Christ is Purity, Simplicity, Goodness, Gentleness, and Innocence. Saint Peter says: “realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct… but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb.” (1 Pt 1:18–19). And Saint John, in the Book of Revelation, uses the term “lamb” as many as thirty times to refer to Jesus Christ.

Christ is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, who was sacrificed to give us grace. Let us strive to live always in a state of grace; let us struggle against sin and reject it. The beauty of a soul in grace is so great that no treasure can compare with it. It makes us pleasing to God and worthy of being loved. That is why, in the Gloria of the Mass, we speak of the peace that belongs to those whom the Lord loves—those who are in grace.

Saint John Paul II urges us to live in the grace that the Lamb has won for us, saying: “Commit yourselves to living in grace. Jesus was born in Bethlehem precisely for this purpose … living in grace is the supreme dignity, it is ineffable joy, it is a guarantee of peace, it is a marvelous ideal.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “When he was born after me [John the Baptist], it is because the time of his birth does not constrain him within limits: born of a mother in time, he is begotten by the Father out of time.” (Saint Gregory the Great)

- “Christ is the ‘lamb’ who takes away the sins of the world. Let us fight to always live by Grace, to fight against sin. The beauty Grace gives to the soul is so great that it makes us agreeable to God and worthy of being love.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man (…), ‘like us in all things but sin’ (Heb 4:15); (…) in these last days was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 467)