

January 15, 2023 – Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
A "Lamb of God" Perspective of our Christian Living
Gospel of John 1:29-34
Fr. Oliver

The central theme of today's readings is a challenge to live like the Lamb of God and to die like the Lamb of God. In both the first and second readings God calls individuals to His service.

The first reading (Is 49:3, 5-6): Bible Scholars have called this and three similar passages from this section of Isaiah (chapters 40-55), the "*Songs of the Suffering Servant*." Today's selection is from the second Servant Song. In the original author's mind, the servant was probably a figure for the people of Israel, or for a faithful remnant within the people.

The second reading is for all the members of the Church in Corinth. Corinth was a bawdy seaport in cosmopolitan Greece. The vices of every seaport, plus the philosophical ferment of ancient Greece, were part of these peoples' lives and gave rise, in part, to the need for this letter. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are "sanctified and called to be holy," like all who call on the Name of Jesus in Faith.

As the **Gospel exegesis exposes**, the call and consecration of John the Baptist by God commissioned him for the important ministry of becoming the *precursor of Jesus*, it was Jesus who was consecrated, and commissioned to bring *salvation* to the world. John the Baptist gives testimony to Jesus by pointing out that he is the *Lamb of God*.

Many people are known not by their name but by their nickname, and sometimes the nicknames indicate who the person is. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was most widely known as Mahatma; Margaret Thatcher as the Iron Lady, and St. Theresa of Lisieux as the Little Flower. Jesus Christ, too, was given names like the Lamb of God, the Servant of God, and the Lord, indicating the roles he performed or fulfilled as he lived on earth. "Lamb of God" is the most meaningful title given to Jesus in the Bible. It is used 29 times in the book of Revelation. It sums up the love, the sacrifice, and the triumph of Christ. Christ as Lamb of God is a title familiar to us. In the Eucharist, at "the breaking of the bread" we proclaim in word or song what the Baptist said. Our traditional fraction anthem is the *Agnus Dei* – "*Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*" In this prayer we give expression to our deepest understanding of the identity and purpose of Jesus Christ as our Lamb and Lord. Let us examine different aspects of this concept.

1) We need to rebuild broken lives. Like the missionary call of the servant in Isaiah (Is 49:1-3) and "those called to be saints" in St. Paul's First Letter to the Church in Corinth (1Cor 1:2ff), we are informed that God's call is trustworthy and true. Therefore, we can believe from the depth of our hearts that our God is faithful. Our faithful response to God is to rebuild broken lives, our own and others', reconciling them with God's love and justice through Christ Jesus our Lamb and Lord.

2) We need to be witnesses to the Lamb of God. Today's Gospel reminds us that being a disciple of Jesus means that we grow by Faith to become witnesses for Him. And bearing witness to Christ is an active, not passive, lifetime enterprise. One cannot be a disciple of Jesus at a distance any more than one can be a distant lover. Blessed are we when we bring to others the gifts of love, peace, justice, patience, and mercy, thus becoming witnesses for the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

3) We need to "Come and see". The essence of our witness-bearing is, first, to state what we have seen and believed and then, to invite others to "come and see." For Andrew and John, Faith begins by responding to Jesus' invitation, "Come and see." Three times Andrew brings someone to Jesus! First, he brings his brother, Simon (1:40), then, a boy with five barley loaves and two fish (6:8); and finally, "some Greeks" (12:20-22), who want to see Jesus, which signals the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified.

"Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world." See Him in his majesty. See Him in His mercy. See Him in His ministry to the world, a ministry to which He calls you and me to complete. May His example inspire us and His presence empower us, so that all the world may come to know that the victory has been won! Let me quote a prayer of a rich man: Oh My God, I'm rich! Silver in the hair, Gold in the teeth, Crystals in the kidney, Sugar in the blood, Lead in the butt, Iron in the arteries, an inexhaustible supply of natural gas. I never thought I'd accumulate such wealth! Yes, one of the differences that Faith should make in our lives is to overcome these material riches; so that we may benefit from the relationship God offers through Christ.