

Reflection for the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

This Sunday we are no longer in the Christmas Season, we have entered Ordinary Time, the vestments are green, the creche has been boxed and stored for use next year, and time has moved on. Our Gospel Reading this Sunday is taken from the Gospel of John, and we hear about John the Baptist seeing Jesus coming toward him and saying, *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* When I hear these words in our Gospel reading spoken by John the Baptist, I think of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For every time the Mass is celebrated at the very heart of the celebration the priest turns to the people and lifts the chalice and the consecrated host, which has become the body and blood of Christ, he then says *“Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi. Beate qui ad cenam Agni vocati sunti (Latin). Este es el Cordero de Dios, que quita el pecado del mundo. Dichosos los invitados a la cena del Señor (Spanish). Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb (English).”* these words are very similar to the words that St. John the Baptist uttered when he saw Christ walking toward him. The priest at every Mass utters these words holding up the host above the chalice, while facing the congregation. The faithful respond by saying, *“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed”*. Every Mass we attend Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Cordero de Dios, the Agnus Dei, is there present on the altar to heal us and save us from our sins. What a true gift to humanity.

We might wonder why St. John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God. It would be natural for us to find the answer in the Book of Exodus Chapter 12 where we hear of the Passover Ritual being prescribed to God's chosen people who are still in bondage awaiting the 10th Plague that God would visit on the Egyptians who have enslaved them. It is this final Plague that will soften the heart of the Pharaoh, and the Israelites will be set free to go to the promised land. The Passover Meal and the placing of lamb's blood on the doorposts and lintel of one's house, is to be observed by God's Chosen people not just on the night of the 10th Plague, but annually as a reminder of God's great love for His people. Our God not only created us but he wishes and enables us to be free of sin and everything that prevents us from fully embracing our one true God.

Calling Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Cordero de Dios, the Agnus Dei, is an invitation to the world to embrace a more solid and permanent relationship with God. This is relationship is not just a relationship between God and His chosen People that he freed from slavery. It is a relationship between God and the whole world. Jesus, the Lamb of God gives His life for all people for all times. Of course, to embrace this forgiveness of the one true God, we must have a contrite heart, and with the grace of God conversion can happen in our daily lives. One, cannot overstate the change that happens in the world by Jesus, coming into the world as the Lamb of God, the Cordero de Dios, the Agnus Dei. With Jesus as the Agnus Dei, there is a permanency to the loving forgiveness of God. The forgiveness of God is no longer dependent on future sacrifices. This is a major change and shift, that creates a deeper sense of a permanent relationship with the one true God.

As we enter Ordinary Time after the Christmas Season, we can see this 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, setting the tone and tenor of this Season. Our Gospel reading this Sunday with the words of St. John the Baptist, *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,”* provides humanity with an invitation and reminder. We are being reminded of the great gift that God has given the world, and how our relationship with God has changed because Jesus has come among us and gave His life for our sins. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Cordero de Dios, the Agnus Dei, that forever gives His life for us. This is the tone and tenor that our Gospel Reading sets for us as we enter the Ordinary Season of the Liturgical Year. We are being reminded that it is through Christ we are truly secure in the love that God has for us, demonstrated through Jesus Christ, the Agnus Dei.