

Homily for Sunday Mass
January 19, 2020
Year A – John 1:29:34
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

We have been on quite a journey of late as we traveled through Advent with great anticipation of the celebration of the birth of our Lord. We then celebrated the Holy Family and last week Fr. Charles walked us through the baptism of Jesus as told from the book of Matthew. Matthew, a very Jewish Gospel in that it was written for a predominantly Jewish audience. Today we continue our journey with a step back to the moments before Jesus' baptism as told through the Gospel of John, a Gospel that has a broader audience than just the Jewish people.

Our first reading (Is 49:3, 5-9), in context of their day, can be a bit un-nerving for the Jewish people hearing it and living in a world of pagans. They, understandably so, saw themselves set apart from the pagan nations but even Isaiah declared that, "...my servant [will] raise up the tribes of Jacob (Israel), [and] will [be] ... a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Is 49:6).

Now, when John the Baptist sees his cousin Jesus approaching, he calls out, "...behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (JN 1:29). "John the Baptizer would have made his testimony in his native Aram. That's important to know because the phrase "lamb of God" in Aram also expresses the phrase "servant of God" [1] Here we have then a proclamation of John linking all the way back to Isaiah and his servant prophecy, and rightfully so. Jesus, the Lamb of God, connects us to the Passover and God's protection and it also foretells of the sacrificial lamb that Jesus will freely assume for the salvation of the world – not just the Jewish world but the entire world. And we know this prophecy is finally upon us as John witness the Spirit rest, and stay, with Jesus, thus declaring that Jesus is in fact the Son of God.

The world...here is the key point that I want to focus on with all of this. Isaiah touched on it with his proclamation of being the light to the nations and salvation to the world. Jesus fulfills this with his teachings, the Liturgy of the Word we celebrate now in the Mass, and in his Eucharist, which we will encounter later in the Mass were all nations, that is, all of you, are welcome without exception. St. Paul also touches on this in our second reading (I Cor 1:1-3) with his introductory letter. Did you figure out why this was in the reading? Paul is very busy holding together these start-up churches filled with people of all walks of life, races, and religions. They bring not only their uniqueness to add to the mix of the greater good, but they also bring their opinions and counter opinions as well. When Paul said to them, "...all those everywhere" he is affirming Isaiah's call to witness to the nations and following Jesus in his teachings and example of love to all people.

Friends, if there is one underlying theme you can take from the homilies at Christ the Good Shepherd from week to week, it is the fact that God created us in love, that God loves each and every one of you in the authentic way in which you are and identify, and that we are programmed in our DNA to love God back in return and called to love each other. Nowhere in any of that will you find an exclusion of God's love. Isaiah professed is centuries before Jesus' birth and Jesus preached it and practiced love for all people, whether God's chosen people or pagan.

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What then, does all this mean in our daily lives? From Isaiah’s prophecy, to John the Baptist’s proclamations, to the teachings and examples of Jesus we are being instructed to love. We are being instructed not to fear the stranger, not to isolate ourselves by national, cultural, racial, or socioeconomic definitions from each other. We are simply called to love. When the Lord announced through the prophet that the servant, that Jesus, was coming there were no exclusions – light to the world, to all nations. Thus, we can not be developing, nor allowing others on our behalf to build such barriers to the true expression of our faith. That is why Christ the Good Shepherd exists after all. We love you as God loves you. In all your perceived imperfections, regardless of your self-identity, your race, your whatever – we simply love you. We extend that love to those in our parish, our community, to the missions we have done in Puerto Rico and are gearing up to do in Guatemala. We do this together as one people of faith, supporting and holding each other up to help our fellow sisters and brothers to live boldly, with no apology, the true expression of God – LOVE.

“Let’s not forget that Jesus is present to us in both Word and Eucharist [today where he teaches us love]...Let the Lamb of God be the shepherd that begins again our path that leads to God...” [2] and the love that God calls us to.

AMEN

---Citations---

The New American Bible: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010

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1. Dr. Lanie LeBlanc OP. <<https://www.preacherexchange.com/volume2.htm>> 01/15/2020
2. Carol & Dennis Keller. <<https://www.preacherexchange.com/volume2.htm>> 01/15/2020