

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). A lamb has a mild manner and is utterly dependent upon man for survival.ⁱ Jesus is the Lamb of God and for his mission to be successful, he is dependent upon drawing others to follow him. John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God and Andrew and John immediately understand the significance.

They were familiar with the Exodus out of slavery. Every family had obtained for itself a lamb, “a year-old male and without blemish” (12:5). The lamb was slaughtered during the evening twilight and some of its blood applied to the doorposts so the angel of death would know to pass over the house and protect its inhabitants as they prepared to escape slavery. “It is the LORD’s Passover” (12:11).

Andrew and John were also familiar with the Prophet Isaiah’s Suffering Servant. “He was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way; but the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all. Though harshly treated, he submitted and did not open his mouth; like a lamb led to slaughter or a sheep silent before shearers, he did not open his mouth” (53:5-7). Through John the Baptist’s testimony, Andrew and John recognize Jesus as the Lamb of God, the fulfillment of the prophecy.

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:36). Each Sunday when we gather for Mass, we hear the words of John the Baptist with reference to Jesus and the New Covenant. Our first reference is with the Gloria.

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of goodwill.” We sing with the angels in heaven using the same words that they used to greet the birth of the Christ child. We rejoice that God has sent his Son among us born in our same flesh. Christ humbled himself in becoming like us and we are struck with awe at the divine plan. (Driscoll 26).ⁱⁱ

After praising God, the Father, we turn our attention back to Jesus Christ crying out, “Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world.” In the penitential rite, we acknowledged our sins and prayed for God’s mercy. Within the Gloria, in the presence of our Holy God, we again ask for mercy as we acknowledge “you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High.” It is most fitting to praise God before listening to his Holy Word (Driscoll 26).

Later in the Mass with the Breaking of the Bread, we ask the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of world, to have mercy on us and grant us peace. We address Jesus by his title the Lamb of God. “He is our Passover Lamb whose Body has been sacrificed, whose Blood has been poured out for the forgiveness of our sins.” The prayer of the assembly, “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world ...” accompany the actions of the priest and deacon in preparing the Bread of Life for distribution. (Driscoll 121).

As we prepare for Holy Communion, we are taking a page out of the Book of Revelation. The vision of the Apostle John explains, he “looked again and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing’” (Rev 5:11-12). In the Book of Revelation, John tells us, “The four living creatures answered, ‘Amen,’ and the elders fell down and worshiped” (5:14). Having completed the song of the Lamb of God, the whole congregation kneels (Driscoll 121).

Next, “the priest holds up before the people the broken bread and, as one declaring a huge mystery, tells the people to fix their gaze on it. He says, “Behold the Lamb of God,” using the

same phrase as John the Baptist and echoing the prayer that has just been said or sung. “Behold him who takes away the sins of the world.” No longer mere bread and wine, the Eucharist is “nothing less than Christ himself among us come as our food, come among us in the form of the sacrifice that takes our sins away.” Then he declares: “Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” And “all the people pray directly to Christ who is held up before them and borrow their words from the centurion who had asked Jesus to cure his paralyzed son: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed” (Mt 8:8, Driscoll 122).

Jesus is truly the Lamb of God. For his mission to continue, he is dependent upon drawing others to follow him. John the Baptist testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God and Andrew and John immediately understood the significance. We have the Sacrifice of the Mass to help us understand. How will you respond to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God for the forgiveness of your sins?

Will you be like Samuel?

“Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10).

Will you respond as we have for our Responsorial Psalm (40)?

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

Will you respond as Paul counsels?

Treating your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit and glorifying God in your body (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Will you respond like Andrew and John?

Follow Jesus. Stay with him. Invite others to come and see.

ⁱ Hahn, Scott. Catholic Bible Dictionary, Lamb, pg. 522.

ⁱⁱ Driscoll, Jeremy. What Happens at Mass, Revised Edition.