

## This is the Lamb of God

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – January 15, 2017 – John 1: 29-34

The Christmas season is over. The Church moves with light speed into the ministry and mission of Christ. Last week we were still standing at the crib. This week we are standing somewhere in the vast landscape of Israel, listening to John the Baptist reference Jesus with the words, **“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”**

To give some reference to what this might mean, we need to understand that the image of the lamb in scripture and in the culture of Jesus was that of innocence and sacrificial victim. Every culture throughout the history of humanity has offered sacrifices to a deity. The sacrifice of animals served a number of purposes. Scripture scholars indicate that the sacrifice of animals stood as gifts to God and atonement for sins. The sacrifice served as a way to be in communion with the deity. To sacrifice an animal that could have been used as food, clothing and shelter was a true offering of one’s essential daily needs.

This week John the Baptist refers to Jesus as this sacrificial offering. **“He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’”** John admits twice that **“I did not know him...”** In some ways this doesn’t make sense as the two of them were cousins, members of the same family, familiar with each other from childhood.

What appears to be happening here is that John the Baptist is confessing belief in Jesus as the Messiah, as God. John clarifies that **“I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.”** John has been able to see that his role was to be the herald of the Christ. **“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.’”**

Within the gospel for this week lies the language and theology of our Eucharistic celebration. Every Mass is a sacrificial offering where we come, broken and in need, of communion with God. Our sacrificial victim is Christ. We take time once a week to gather around the altar of sacrifice to remember what Christ has done for us. Let us not forget that our gathering every week around the table of the Lord is our sacrifice to God. When we gather in community to offer up our sins and our failures we celebrate Jesus’ mercy, love and forgiveness. This is why he was born. This is why he died. The gift he gave is that we might have eternal life.

Blessings!

  
Sue Schettler