

## Chaplain's Bulletin January 15, 2023



Dear Folks,

As we get back to ordinary time, we journey with Jesus and His followers in the Gospels. In our Gospel today, we see John the Baptist introducing Jesus with, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).” He explains that he knew this by the power of the Holy Spirit. We remember this is the second time John the Baptist recognized Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (See Luke 1:39-45). We are so used to calling Jesus the Lamb of God we can forget how strange it would sound at the time. He is, of course referring to the Passover Lamb, and the Gospel of John will develop the theme of Jesus and Passover quite extensively.

In the Gospel of John, the Baptists job is to introduce Jesus, and he will use two images: the Passover Lamb and the Bridegroom (see John 3:22-30). These two images are brought together at the end of the Book of Revelation with the wedding of the Bride (the Church) and the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9; 21:9-21, note especially “Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb [Rev. 19:9]”).

John the Baptist will refer to himself as the “friend of the bridegroom” or the best man (John 3:29). If you read Brant Pitre’ book “Jesus the Bridegroom” he will explain that the role of friend of the bridegroom was critical in Jewish culture, and he brings the bride to the groom. He says that rabbinic literature will say God was playing the role of friend of the bridegroom when He brought Eve to Adam (Genesis 1:22). As we keep reading the Gospel of John we see that the next day the Baptist repeats the message to two of his disciples, including Andrew, and they start following Jesus (In bringing those who would be Church to the Lamb, John is acting as friend of the Bridegroom).

During Mass, the priest holds up the Blessed Sacrament and says, “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.” Bringing together John 1:29 and Revelation 19:9, this spans the work of Jesus from beginning to end and our journey with Jesus from beginning to end; the whole of the great mystery of salvation, the great mystery of life is before us. If we take this seriously, it should make us tremble a bit. We respond, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” This precious phrase comes from Matthew chapter 8, right after the Sermon on the Mount (which began, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [Mat. 5:3]”). Matthew 8 begins with two healings. First, there is a leper, who was the poorest of the poor. He could offer Jesus nothing; he was totally dependent on Jesus’ mercy. The second, by contrast was a centurion asking for healing for his servant. He was, in material terms, probably the wealthiest and most powerful person ever to set foot in the little town of Capernaum, and he had been very generous to the people there (See Luke 7:4-5). If anyone could have expected to approach Jesus with a sense of entitlement, it was him. However, he makes this profoundly humble statement, “I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof (Mat 8:8; Luke 7:6-7).” He was materially wealthy, but he was poor in spirit, as we are called to be. We remember when people approached Jesus with a sense of entitlement, it does not end well (see Luke 4:14-30).”

We are called to remember, as we receive the most awesome gift of the Eucharist, that we so very much do not deserve this wonderful gift but we trust in His great mercy. This helps put us in the right disposition. In 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 St. Paul says some fierce things about those who receive Holy Communion without the proper disposition. Let us never forget what all this is about.

The Lord is calling us. How do we respond?

Blessings,

Fr. Jim