

## 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

### GOSPEL

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Seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is the one I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me. I did not know him myself, and yet it was to reveal him to Israel that I came baptising with water.' John also declared, 'I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him. I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit." Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God.'

(John 1:29-34)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The title of 'Lamb of God' would have suggested the Passover feast to those listening to John. At that time, sacrificial lambs were slaughtered in the temple, recalling the blood of the lambs that was shed so that Israel could be spared death and freed from slavery in Egypt. Read the story of this deliverance in Exodus 12.
- Now that the Christmas cycle is completed, the Church enters what is known as 'Ordinary Time' for a period. (This will be interrupted for the Lent-Easter-Pentecost cycle.)
- Ordinary Time does not mean a time that is commonplace or unremarkable. The name derives from the word *ordinal*, which means 'counted and sequential'.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This week, we depart from the normal cycle of readings from Matthew for this text in John. There is no explicit account of the baptism of Jesus in John. Rather, the emphasis is on John the Baptist as a witness to the real identity of Jesus: the Lamb of God and the Chosen One of God. Twice John the Baptist says, 'I did not know him myself but it was to reveal him that I came.' Such a statement would have had a significant effect on the evangelist's community. This is the last of the gospels written, at around the end of the first century. It is unlikely that many followers of Jesus in this community would have known him personally, some seventy years earlier!

But John the Baptist, despite his not knowing Jesus in person, is in no doubt as to his identity. Filled with conviction, he knows that Jesus is the one in whom the hopes of Israel and all humankind will be fulfilled. 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe' (John 20:29).

- In what ways does this echo our own experience of not knowing Jesus as a physical reality but recognising him as the fulfillment of our longings?
- What things may hinder our recognition of Jesus?
- How could you point others to Jesus and give witness to who he is?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How do you witness to the Chosen One of God?
- Twice John says that he did not know Jesus himself, but that Jesus was revealed to him by God. What was it that first revealed Jesus to you?
- What sin of the world is in need of redemption today?
- Have you ever been an eye witness to something significant, either in your family or in the wider community? Share stories of what you have seen? How did you bear witness to this event? What effect did it have on you?
- Like John, give witness to Christ this week. Share something of your search for faith with others.
- The title of 'Lamb of God' is used of Jesus during the liturgy in the Communion rite. Learn this prayer by heart and say it often, contemplating its meaning:

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

Down the centuries, there have been many people who, filled with conviction, have given brave witness to Christ. In the early church, this sometimes meant death. The martyrs of the Church are revered for their loyal faith and witness to the truth of Christ, and they hold a special place among the saints.

- You could tell the stories of some of the martyrs of the New Testament and the early church, or from later periods of church history, especially those listed in Eucharistic Prayer I.
• It needs to be pointed out that even in this modern day, people are still persecuted for their faith, and modern missionaries sometimes pay the ultimate price.

Australian Sr Irene McCormack is an example of one who was killed because of her faith. You could tell her story. St Oscar Romero is another story you could tell.

- We may not expect to lose our lives for our faith, but there are times we may be persecuted or reviled for being believers. Discuss how this may manifest in our own society.
• In recent years, we have heard of instances where Christian minority groups are persecuted because of their faith. Discuss some examples of this. How should we best promote religious freedom today?

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

Just as with Jesus, the Holy Spirit is conferred upon the faithful at baptism, and the Spirit's presence is affirmed at the sacrament of confirmation. How do you perceive the Spirit with you already in your journey towards baptism or reception?

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- How does your community give public witness to Christ, outside the Sunday liturgy?
• Use a lighted candle and an image of Jesus or an icon as a focus for prayer. A suitable song might be 'Christ be our Light' (GA 404). Pray for all those who give witness to their faith. Pray for those who are persecuted or have lost their lives for their faith. Pray for each other and the strength to be witnesses. Conclude with the prayer of exorcism in RCIA at §94D.

NOTES

Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.