

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD**  
**in**  
**THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY**  
**Second Sunday in the Ordinary Time**  
**January 15, 2023**

**Lectionary Readings:**

**Isaiah 49:3-6**

**1 Corinthians 1:1-3**

**John 1:29-34**

**God uses One who was rejected to bring salvation.**

**We have been called into fellowship with Christ.**

**Jesus is the Lamb who will be sacrificed for us.**

**John:**

The baptism of Jesus in John's Gospel gives witness to the titles of Jesus and establishes his identity as agent of salvation for the whole world. He is the *Lamb* who brings the sacrifice of the new Exodus into effect. He is the *Pre-Existent One* who was before John ever was born.

"*The Spirit remained on him....*" In numerous places in the Scriptures, we read that the Spirit came upon or was given to someone. The Gospel of John uses a very special and quite unique expression when describing the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit: The Spirit *abides* with him. The Spirit may have *come into or taken hold* of a prophet or of an apostle. But with Jesus, the Spirit *remains*. This is no temporary or passing relationship. The Spirit is at home in Jesus. Jesus is a proper and fully accommodating residence for the Spirit of God. The Spirit '*rests* with him, because Jesus already shares with the Spirit in the divine nature of God.' In retrospect, today, we can say that the Spirit remains with Jesus because Jesus is God also, as is the Holy Spirit. But, that is a theological and doctrinal conclusion that the Church drew from these Scriptures after centuries of contemplation and prayer.

It is clear that the author of the Gospel of John does not consider Jesus to be just another man like others who have been sent by God for a particular mission. Jesus does not have to do the works assigned him by the Father. Jesus and the Father are one. There is a depth of identification between Jesus and the Father that goes deeper than similarity of works. Jesus does the works of God because he is God. Having just proclaimed the divinity of Christ in the soaring "Prologue" (John 1:1-14), the Gospel takes up the same subject in another way: the testimony of John the Baptist. The whole Gospel will continue doing the same: proclaiming that Jesus Christ and the Father are one and the same God.

The relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit is such that Jesus is able to give that Spirit to others. It is not just that God gives the Holy Spirit to the Church community at the *request of Jesus* but that Jesus possesses the Spirit in such fullness that he is able to impart that Spirit to others (John 3:5 & 34; 7:38-39,20:22). In John's Gospel, the Holy Spirit is always given by Jesus to the community of disciples.

*The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.* The Gospel of John does not interpret the death of Jesus as Paul does, giving it an atonement value for our sins. But the image of the lamb who carries the sins of men and women and goes to its death for the elimination of those sins is taken from the Book of Exodus. The Lamb takes the sins of the world upon himself and becomes a substitute for the suffering due to those sins.

What we have here is an apparently simple scene where John the Baptist testifies that he, himself, is not the Messiah. He goes on to say that Jesus is the one. But he gets into that astounding

language about a sacrificial death for the remission of sins and about the Holy Spirit coming to *rest* and *abide* with Jesus. This passage is not at all as simple and straightforward as it seems to be. It is impregnated with a highly charged series of images that convey earth-shattering truths about the divinity of Christ. What we have here is theological exposition of the most profound kind: God among us! What a way to go into Sundays in the Ordinal Series! These Sundays are far from “ordinary.”

### **Isaiah:**

In the Book of Isaiah, there are four poems that have been called “Servant Songs,” (1-Isaiah 42:1-4, 2-Isaiah 49:3-5; 3-Isaiah 50:4-11; 4-Isaiah 52:13-53:12). They speak of a Servant of God who would come with total and absolute dedication to the Lord God. The Christian community was quick to see that this Servant was none other than Jesus Christ. Today, we hear the second song: How this Servant was called by God even before he was born; how he has a special mission to the Gentiles; how the Servant himself responds to God. The Servant will lead vast throngs of people to the Lord God.

### **1 Corinthians:**

From this Sunday to the Seventh Sunday in the Ordinal Series, being interrupted only by the Lenten and Easter seasons, we will hear the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians. The Church proposes that we listen in its entirety to one of the most important letters from the Christian Scriptures. Using both the Greek and Hebrew forms of greeting (*grace* is Greek; *peace* is Hebrew) Paul shows that Christians can call Jesus *The Lord*, a title previously reserved to God alone. Jesus Christ truly is the Lord present among people.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. In what sense could John the Baptist say that he did not recognize Jesus at first? Can you hear the voice of the early Christians who put these words in John’s mouth to confess that they had not always known Christ? Those who come to Christ later in life often lament: “How could I have been so blind all these years?” Have you had some such feelings in your experience of the Lord?

2. Explain how the coming of the Spirit makes it possible for us to give testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is it that the Spirit alone can reveal who Jesus really is? Without the Holy Spirit abiding and working in us, would we be able to give witness concerning Jesus Christ? Explain how we need to be sealed with the Spirit in confirmation in order to be able to witness effectively in our lives.

3. “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us....grant us peace.” Why do you suppose we offer this prayer just before we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ in holy Communion at the Liturgy of the Eucharist? In this “Fraction Rite” (Breaking of the Bread), we need to say, again and again, for as long as it takes, that the Lamb of the new Passover has taken our sins upon himself and has gone through the death of the cross with them. What does this mean?

## SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Take an inventory of how you value (or do not value) certain persons around you. Try to recognize the presence of Christ in everyone you encounter this week.

## PRAYER

**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.**

## CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

Baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist in the Catholic Church are considered sacraments of initiation. We are introduced into the community of the disciples of Jesus Christ through these three sacraments. It takes all three to be fully initiated and to participate fully in all the dimensions of the Church's life.

By baptism, we die to sin and rise again to share in the life of the Risen Christ. We are granted fellowship with all who are baptized. We have our first access to membership in the Church. Joined to the Risen One at the very depth of our being, we stand before God with the dignity of the redeemed, with the stature of his priestly people. We have the right and the power to intercede for ourselves and for others before the throne of God in our identification with Christ.

In confirmation, the gift of the Holy Spirit comes to seal the baptized person in the power of God for life everlasting. The anointing with sacred chrism evokes the anointing of Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit for the mission given him by the Father. Confirmation allows the baptized to take up a ministry in the Church so that the works of salvation begun by Jesus may be continued in this world.

The Eucharist gathers the members of the Church at the table of spiritual fellowship with Christ and with one another, to be fed for the journey of life in anticipation of the eternal banquet in the heavenly kingdom. This feeding with the Bread of Life completes the sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ begun in baptism. The Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist applies the one sacrifice of Christ to this Christian and to all his/her brothers and sisters in the faith. Eucharist is the goal and the summit of spiritual sharing here on earth, a sign of the ultimate sharing with God in heaven.

God has called each one of us to encounter Jesus Christ in the community of the Church so that we might be saved. In the Church, we continue the ministries begun by Jesus in his earthly life. We share through the power of the Holy Spirit in the works of Christ for the people of our times in the places where we live. The Church as body of Christ living in the world today functions as the Christ bringing good news and salvation to all men and women.

Up to the beginning of this century, in the Church of the West, the sacraments of initiation were celebrated in the order described above: baptism, followed by confirmation, followed by Eucharist. Thus were men, women, and children initiated into Christianity. The Diocese of Portland has returned to that age-old practice.