

John the Baptist stands before us today with a simple but life-changing command:

“Behold, the Lamb of God.”

Those words should sound familiar to us. Every time we gather for Mass, we echo them in the Agnus Dei:

“Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us... grant us peace.”

And moments later, the priest lifts up the Host and proclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.”

What we hear in today’s Gospel is not only a title for Jesus—it is an invitation. John does not say, “Understand the Lamb of God” or “Analyze the Lamb of God.” He says, “Behold.” Look. Gaze. Recognize who stands before you.

This phrase, Lamb of God, appears explicitly here in John’s Gospel, and it carries enormous weight. It reaches back to the night of Israel’s deliverance, when the blood of the Passover lamb marked the homes of God’s people and protected them from death. That lamb was not only sacrificed; it was eaten in a sacred meal. The Lamb who would save is also the Lamb who continues to nourish and save. This reminds us to continually return to the only source of our salvation, lest our spiritual life atrophy and die. When John calls Jesus the Lamb of God, he is declaring

that this man is God's answer to humanity's deepest problem: sin. And that word—sin—is one we struggle to hear today. Our culture has largely lost its sense of sin, and with it, its sense of the need for a Savior. Scripture speaks with bracing honesty: "If we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8). If I believe that I am basically fine on my own, that I have no real need for forgiveness, then salvation becomes unnecessary. But the truth is more honest—and more hopeful. There are many things we can accomplish by ourselves, but saving ourselves from sin is not one of them. Only God can forgive sins. And he longs to do so.

Each of us carries within us a wounded humanity, a tendency to choose what ultimately does not give life. Yet the Good News of the Gospel is this: no one is excluded from God's mercy. Every one of us is offered a Savior. We are not saved by self-improvement, but by surrender. What Jesus offers us is not condemnation, but forgiveness; not fear, but peace. And yet this gift, freely given, must be freely received—again and again—if it is to bear fruit in our lives.

This is the unique gift of Christianity. As Scripture and tradition insist, Jesus is not merely a moral teacher or a spiritual guide among many others. He is the Son of God who gives his life for the sins of the world. No one else claims this. No one else offers this. Only Jesus takes away sin. As Dr. John Bergsma notes, "We may have respect for other great moral teachers and founders of religions who

have graced the history of civilization: Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Socrates, Gandhi. But none of them taught the morality of self-sacrificial love like Jesus, none of them claimed to be divine, and none offered his life in atonement for the sins of the world. Only Jesus can save us from our sins.”[1]

That gift, however, must be received again and again. Growth in holiness does not mean pretending we no longer struggle; it means continually turning back to the Lamb who shows mercy. Through prayer, through self-denial, through the sacraments—especially Confession—and through the support of the Christian community, we allow God to keep shaping our hearts.

That is why our parish matters. This is not simply a place we attend; it is a place where we are formed. Here we learn how to behold the Lamb of God together. Here we are strengthened as the Body of Christ. Here we are prepared, week by week, for the supper of the Lamb in heaven.

Today, John the Baptist points once more and says, “Behold.” May we not look away. May we recognize who stands before us. And may we trust that the Lamb of God truly takes away the sins of the world—and our own.

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[1] John Bergsma, *The Word of the Lord: Reflections on the Sunday Mass Readings for Year A* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2022), 199.