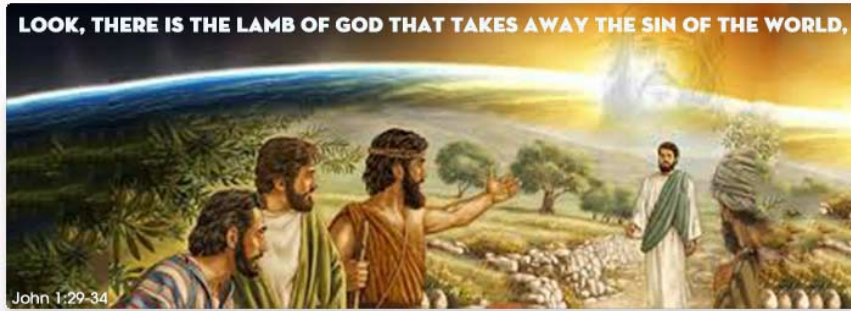


LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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**SECOND SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME**

18th January 2026

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

In the tradition of the liturgical year, there are three “epiphanies” of Jesus: the first is the feast of the Epiphany (Jan 6), the second is the Baptism of the Lord (the following Sunday) and the third is the Wedding Feast of Cana (the next Sunday). With the current three-year lectionary, the Cana story is read in the year of Luke. For the other two years, an “epiphany” moment from John’s Gospel is used—today it is the witness of the Baptist to Jesus.

It is very often the case in the Fourth Gospel that we are (over)hearing not the historical words of John (or others) but rather the theology, the spiritual teaching of the evangelist. This means we are dealing with a text full of Johannine vocabulary and theology. These scenes represent a remarkable theology of the identity of Jesus, the risen Lord present in the community of faith.

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 29 John and Jesus seem not to meet in this Gospel (the baptism as such is not recounted here). Again, nothing prepares us for the identification of Jesus with the Lamb of God. It is historically most unlikely that John the Baptist made such a proclamation. Rather, we have here the spiritual teaching of the Fourth Gospel, which does indeed identify Jesus as our Passover Lamb, as is evident in the details of the death of Jesus in this Gospel: noon, hyssop, not breaking the bones. Noon was the established time when it was permitted to begin slaughtering the Passover lambs (John 19:14). Hyssop is impractical for sustaining a sponge, but it echoes the instructions for the Passover (John 19:29). The breaking of the legs is found only in this Gospel; again, it echoes the instructions for the Passover lamb (John 19:33). The human issue of sin (sin as such, and not sins) will be “resolved” by Jesus as he discloses the astonishing love of God both in his teaching and in his “lifting up”. Cf. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.* (John 3:16)

KIERAN O’MAHONY OSA - www.tarsus.ie

REFLECTION

We too need to know Jesus not just for what he did but also as a person who lives now. As disciples we do not just obey rules, we are friends (John 15:15) because Jesus wants us to know him and the Father who sent him. Our baptism initiated us into the relationship but it is up to us to nourish it through prayer, the Eucharist and our loving service to one another. As with John the Baptist, if we know Jesus then our lives will testify to it. The squabbles which emerged among the believers in Corinth were a scandal and a betrayal of the good news. So as we reflect on these readings, let us thank God for the parish or local community to which we belong and let us ask God’s blessing on all who are working there to build up the Body of Christ which is his church.

SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand

The passage has a double focus: Jesus and John the Baptist. John invites us to “look” at Jesus; he reflects on his mission to proclaim Jesus to the world.

We are free to identify with either:

- to celebrate times when some John the Baptist (a person, a word or an event) invites us to take a fresh look at Jesus “coming towards us”;
- to celebrate our mission as parents, teachers, friends, community leaders, spiritual guides to “proclaim” to the world (and often to ourselves) that those in our care are sacred.

Firstly, John points to two aspects of Jesus:

a) He is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (verse 29). We say these words at every Mass, and we have become so accustomed to them that they no longer _____ us. We can take the opportunity of this Sunday’s reading to let them come alive for us. We do this in the lectio divina way

– linking text and experience and letting each throw light on the other:

- the words help us to appreciate those who have been for us “lambs of God” who “took away” the sin of our community;
- people who have touched our lives help us to understand the words.

The second part of the saying - “he takes away the sin of the world” – states the purpose of the first, so we start with it. It tells us that Jesus is an activist; he does not merely oppose sin in theory, he “takes it away”. He does not accept sin as inevitable, he wages war against it. As individuals and as a church we have tended to water down this aspect of Jesus’ – and our – mission:

- we resign ourselves to accepting evil on the grounds that it is inevitable and in any case we are powerless to do anything about it; we say to ourselves – and to others – that this is how life is and we must accept it;

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. John is one who directs people to Jesus as the one who had a life-giving message for them. Who have been the people in your life whose example or advice pointed you in the direction of a fuller life? Who has helped you to appreciate the importance of Jesus and his message?
2. In the narrative John recognised that Jesus had more to offer people than he himself. He had the humility not to need to be the star of the show. Whom have you known with that grounded sense of their own place?
3. John proclaims Jesus as one who takes away the sin of the world. Who have been the people who, for you, continued this mission of Jesus and led you from sin and guilt to forgiveness and freedom? For whom have you done this?
4. It was not just on the cross that Jesus gave his life as the Lamb of God. His public ministry was a constant struggle against injustice and oppression. When have you shared in this mission of Jesus? Who have been models of this for you?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - Intercom

The evangelists work to keep the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of John apart. They are not to be confused. The baptism of Jesus does not consist in immersing followers in the waters of a river. Jesus immerses them in the Holy Spirit.

John’s Gospel says clearly that Jesus has the fullness of the Spirit of God and, therefore, can give that fullness to his followers. The extraordinary originality of Jesus is that Jesus is the *Son of God* who can *baptise with the Holy Spirit*.

The baptism of Jesus is not a form of external bathing, as some may have known in the waters of the Jordan. His is an *internal* bathing. The metaphor suggests that Jesus communicates his Spirit to penetrate, soak and transform the heart of the person.

The Holy Spirit is regarded by the evangelists as the *Spirit of Life*. So, to accept being baptised by Jesus means accepting His Spirit as a source of new life. His Spirit can empower us through a vital relationship with him. He can raise us to a new level of Christian existence, to a new stage of Christianity that is more faithful to Jesus.

The Spirit of Jesus is the **Spirit of Truth**. To accept being baptised by him is to put truth in our Christianity; it is to give up ways that lead us astray from the gospel.

The Spirit of Jesus is the **Spirit of Love**, able to free us from cowardice and the selfishness that makes us think only of our interests and our prosperity. To accept being baptised by him is to be open to a love that is inclusive, gratuitous and compassionate.

The Spirit of Jesus is the **Spirit of Conversion** to God. To accept being baptised by Jesus means to let ourselves be transformed by him slowly, learning to live by his criteria, his attitudes, his heart and his sensitivity to anything that dehumanised the children of God.

The Spirit of God is a **Spirit of Renewal**. To accept being baptised by Jesus is to accept being drawn into his creative newness. He can awaken the best there is in the church and give it a new heart with a greater ability to be faithful to the Gospel.

JOSE A PAGOLA - Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year A