

We Respond

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ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) All the earth shall bow down before you, O God, and shall sing to your name, O Most High!

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 39)

ANTIPHON: Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

RESPONSE: Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

LECTOR: I waited, I waited for the Lord and he stooped down to me; he heard my cry. He put a new song into my mouth, praise of our God. **R.**

LECTOR: You do not ask for sacrifice and offerings, but an open ear. You do not ask for holocaust and victim. Instead, here am I. **R.**

LECTOR: In the scroll of the book it stands written that I should do your will. My God, I delight in your law in the depth of my heart. **R.**

LECTOR: Your justice I have proclaimed in the great assembly. My lips I have not sealed; you know it, O Lord. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. He enabled those who accepted him to become the children of God. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) You have prepared a table before me, and how precious is the chalice that quenches my thirst.

Or

We have come to know and to believe in the love that God has for us.

TODAY'S READINGS Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; John 1:29-34.

NEXT WEEK (3rd Sunday of Year A) Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3; Ps 26; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17; Matt 4:12-23

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A term of great honour



15 January 2023 2nd Sunday Year A

Some people today may be puzzled by John the Baptist referring to Jesus in today's gospel as the "lamb of God", since for most of us the lambs we see in the paddocks are cute, but weak and vulnerable to predators. You don't hear of nations, or even sporting teams, adopting 'lambs' as their emblem. Why should John identify "the Chosen One of God" as the "lamb of God"?

The people for whom John was writing his gospel would have heard the "lamb of God" very differently to us. For those familiar with the Old Testament, the term "lamb of God" had extremely powerful resonances, especially in the suffering servant passages in Isaiah, and in the Exodus from Egypt.

Recall how Isaiah gives an astonishing account of the suffering servant who is beaten, arrested and put to death: "Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, he never said a word." Yet by his endurance we are saved and forgiven by God (Is. 53:7).

At the Exodus from Egypt, we read of God sending a destroying angel to kill all the first born of people and animals in the land, to force Pharaoh to release the Israelites from their bondage. Moses instructs the Israelites to take the blood of a lamb or kid and put it on the doorpost overnight to protect them from the angel of death (Ex. 12). This Passover became a defining feast for the Jewish people ever after, and it resonates in our Christian Eucharist as well.

So, for us the "lamb of God" is indeed a term of great honour, not one of weakness but of incredible endurance and commitment by God in Jesus to our wellbeing and salvation. The symbol of the lamb is not one of threat or violence, but of innocence and solidarity with those in suffering.

Curiously in John's gospel, there is no mention of John the Baptist baptising Jesus. John the Baptist even says he did not know Jesus but recognised him from the sign of the Spirit descending on him. John speaks as a prophet witnessing to the true identity of Jesus as the Chosen One who takes away "the sin of the world", the primordial disorder in all creation and in us.

John witnesses the Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus, but the Spirit is not for Jesus alone. Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit, and so the Spirit will be alive in all the followers of Jesus.

John in his gospel is intent on showing how the same Holy Spirit in Jesus is the very same Spirit animating the small and seemingly insignificant Christian communities of his day. He is urging the followers of Jesus to allow God's Spirit to nudge them to be good news, with the 'lamb of God' as their emblem, capturing God's intense personal commitment to our wellbeing, and calling us to a similar commitment to others.

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