

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
(Isaiah 49:3.5-6 John 1:29-34)
15.01.2023

Dear brothers and sisters,

In today's gospel passage, John the Baptist bears witness to Jesus. Let us take a moment to listen to his testimony. Let us allow his testimony to nourish our understanding of the person of Jesus and our faith in Him.

John the Baptist tells us that Jesus is the one spoken of when it is said in the Prologue to St John's gospel: "**A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me**", or to use another translation: "A man is coming after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born". Jesus existed before being born in Bethlehem. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. In the same Prologue to John's gospel, the fourth evangelist tells us that "In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him".

If we take on board this testimony of John, we cannot reduce Jesus to an ordinary human person who was born in Bethlehem and who some thirty three years later died on a cross near Jerusalem. The truth is that the Word of God, who was with God from the beginning of time, became man in Jesus. And we know that his life as man did not finish with his death on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead. He is alive. He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven and at the same time He is with us here on earth.

The testimony of John the Baptist enlarges our vision and gives us a fuller picture of the person of Jesus. Jesus is really God made man. Jesus is really God and man. Jesus is really the mediation, better still the mediator between God and humanity. While Jesus is the humble child born in Bethlehem from the Virgin Mary, He is, at the same time, the one through whom everything was created. In Jesus, God became one of us in order to make us one with Him. God became man in Jesus in order to share his divinity with us. Yes, Jesus existed before John the Baptist, even if Jesus was born after John the Baptist...

This testimony of John the Baptist in Jesus' regard enlightens our own lives. Well before our birth, we existed in the mind of God. After our death, we shall remain alive in God for ever. This is the full picture of our lives. We have to constantly keep this in mind, if we want to live our lives to the full, if we want to live our lives in God's perspective, if we want to live our lives with meaning and hope.

John the Baptist tells us that "**Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**". The title "lamb of God" blends two biblical images: first the image of the suffering servant who takes all sins upon himself and offers himself for us as a lamb of expiation -We find this image in chapter 53 of the Prophet Isaiah known as "the fourth

song of the Servant”- and another important image, that of the Passover lamb which symbolizes Israel’s redemption.

To understand fully the title “lamb of God”, we have to become familiar with the ritual practice of Israel. The people of Israel used to establish and renew their union with God and among themselves through the mediation of a lamb which was offered and sacrificed as a sign of communion with God or, when they had sinned and repented, in order to be reconciled with God. Jesus, the Lamb of God, is not a lamb among others, but the Lamb, the true and unique Lamb through whom God enters the human story, and offers it reconciliation with himself. Jesus is the only one able to establish us in full communion with God. Through his passion and death, he reconciles us sinners with God. In Jesus we are set free from the slavery of sin, In Jesus, **the Son of God**, the unique Son of God, we become adoptive children of God, beloved sons and daughters of the Father.

In today’s gospel passage, John the Baptist goes on to declare: **“I saw the Spirit coming down on Jesus from heaven like a dove and resting on him”**. The Spirit of God has entered the human story by descending and remaining upon Jesus, just as the Baptist had been told: “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit”. Jesus is the one upon whom the Spirit remains and who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. On the day of our baptism, we were clothed with Christ and we received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspires our prayer; He does not cease to pray within us the prayer of Jesus, a prayer pleasing to the Father: “Abba – Father”. The Holy Spirit is also the one who inspires our choices and our decisions in life.

The point for us to grasp is that we should be aware and attentive of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit within us. We can become so accustomed to it that we forget all about it. The Spirit dwells within us; He is as close and vital to us as our breathing. Let us welcome Him.

May the testimony John the Baptist bears to Jesus revive and strengthen our own faith in Christ, the Word of God made flesh, the Lamb of God who takes away our sins, the Son of God who baptises us with the Holy Spirit!