

2nd Sunday A Ordinary Time - Our Lady Queen of Apostles

Introduction

When I was growing up, my parents went through a lot of trouble to point out things that I should notice. Sometimes they said, “Look, your shoes are untied” – or “look out” when I knocked a ceramic platter to the floor. Dad knew I liked old cars, so when I was in the 6th grade, he took me to an antique car show. I remember him saying of a classic Packard from the mid 1930’s: “Now look at that, Bill! That’s a real car!” And compared to the lemon he was driving at the time, he was right! One time my mom took me to the parish church where she and dad were married (67 years ago yesterday!) – to show me its beautiful works of religious art. She pointed out the main altar with its glittering mosaic of the Lamb of God. “Look how beautiful that is,” she said to me.

In each of these instances, mom and dad wanted me to see and appreciate what they saw and understood – they wanted me to see the disadvantages of running around with shoes untied; they wanted me to see the goodness and beauty they saw in a well-designed car or in genuinely lovely religious art.

Seeing What John the Baptist Saw

In the Gospel we meet John the Baptist who cries out: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” The Holy Spirit had opened John’s eyes so he could recognize Jesus, as the Savior for whom he was preparing the way. And now John wants everyone, including ourselves, to recognize Jesus. So he says to you and me, “Behold!” – which is lot more than saying, “Look at this or that!” – It really means, “Stop, gaze at this, and be amazed!”

When John calls Jesus ‘the Lamb of God’, what does he want us to see in Jesus? He is reminding us of the ancient sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb that delivered the Jewish people from the slavery of Egypt. And then he’s telling us that the Paschal Lamb of old pointed to Jesus, to God’s Son would become one of us so as to lay down his life for us, to deliver us all from the slavery of sin. John wants us to see that Jesus is no ordinary man. He’s not just a teacher of morality or a philosopher or a charismatic

person. John testifies that the Holy Spirit is with Jesus, the Son of God made man, who has come as the Savior of the world.

Taking Jesus for Granted

Mom & dad pointed out things that were dangerous & things that were beautiful so that I wouldn't take these things for granted, so that I would live my life with awareness, understanding, and appreciation. John the Baptist wants us not only to be aware of Jesus and appreciate him, and more than that, he wants us to place our faith in Jesus and to acknowledge that we truly need him as our Savior and Redeemer.

But like kid I was back in the 50's and 60's, we sometimes fail to see in Jesus what John the Baptist earnestly wants us to see. Yes, we take even Jesus for granted - and how do we do this?

One way is to regard Jesus as our ace in the hole. We may acknowledge him as our Lord and our Savior but keep him tucked away in some corner until we need him - when we're facing a difficult exam or get into some kind of trouble. When John the Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God," he's telling us that Jesus is a lot more than a lucky charm, he's our Redeemer!

Another way to take Jesus granted is to say that we're "spiritual but not religious". Lots of people feel that way today - they may acknowledge some sort of spiritual reality but shun any specific beliefs. People who feel this way may assume they know Jesus without any help from anyone, including a community of faith. John the Baptist would never have recognized Jesus without the faith of Jewish people and we won't truly recognize Christ apart from the authentic teaching of Church. When John says to you and me, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" - he wants us really to know Jesus and why we need him in our lives.

Still another way to take Jesus for granted is to accept more or less everything our faith teaches us about Jesus but not to let it affect the way we live. Sometimes people say, "I know he loves me unconditionally" - something that is actually quite true but often gets reduced to something like this: "I'll do what I want and Jesus won't mind a bit. After all, he loves me!" John the Baptist doesn't want us to take Jesus' love for granted. He wants us to see how Jesus' love can change, even

transform our lives and bring us the happiness that our sins and moral compromises never could.

The Eucharist

In a few moments, I'll hold up the consecrated Host and say: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." When I do this, I will want you not to see a piece of bread but the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus. I will want you to be amazed and joyful that Jesus has chosen to remain with us, to walk with us, to be with us in such a personal and powerful way. When I hold up the Host and say, "Behold the Lamb of God" - see the Person of Jesus who accepted the burden of our sins and weakness and overcame them by dying on the Cross and rising from the dead.

And once we appreciate, understand, and believe in Jesus and in his abiding, saving presence in our lives, then like John the Baptist we will say: "Now I have seen for myself and testify, this is God's Chosen One!" And like St. Paul, we will accept our calling, the calling we received when we were baptizing and confirmed, to bear witness to the presence of Jesus - to help others in our lives to open their eyes of faith and recognize "Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!"

May God bless us and keep us always in His love!"