

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 18th, 2026

St. Edward's Parish

Friends, last Sunday the Christmas season concluded with the Baptism of the Lord, and we have now entered the season of Ordinary Time. The word “ordinary” is not meant to mean uninteresting or boring; rather it signifies that we follow an *ordered* numbering of weeks as we contemplate the adult life of Jesus through the Gospels. Today we turn to the beginning of the public life of Jesus with John the Baptist's first announcement: “Look, here is the Lamb of God”. John's whole life was about announcing the coming of Jesus, so it is important to notice this first title he chooses to use: “The Lamb of God”

When we hear Jesus is the “Lamb of God”, what does that mean? Some might conclude that it means He is gentle like a lamb. Perhaps it could mean that Jesus is innocent and pure. While both are true, they fall short. John the Baptist had something more profound in mind. For the Jewish people of the first century, to hear someone speak of the “Lamb of God”, would immediately call to mind the sacrifices of the Temple.

The Feast of Passover was observed every year by all Jewish households, and it recalled how God delivered their ancestors from slavery in Egypt about 1400 years before Jesus. You find the account of this in the book of Exodus. The Egyptian Pharaoh refused to let the Jewish people go free, so God revealed to Moses that He would kill every first born in Egypt of both people and animals. However, to spare the Jewish people, God instructed each household to sacrifice a 1-year-old, unblemished, male lamb. They were to sprinkle the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. Seeing the blood, God would pass over those households and spare them from death. The Jewish people repeated this ritual sacrifice each year as a reminder of how God saved them. In addition, animal sacrifice, including lambs, was a regular part of Jewish life as an act of worship of God and atonement for sins. Therefore, when John speaks of a Lamb of God, the people of his time would have readily understood that he is speaking about a sacrifice to save from death and sin.

The title “Lamb of God” would have also called to mind a prophecy of Isaiah that we still read every Good Friday. This foretells a servant of the Lord who will take upon himself the sins of the people: “the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isa 53:6–7). Therefore, when John says, “Behold the Lamb of God”, he indicates that Jesus has come to offer His life to free us from death and atone for our sins.

Notice now how these words of John, “Behold the Lamb of God” echo down to us today. At the Mass when the priest holds up the chalice and Host, he says these same words. And these words point to a specific reality: at the heart of the Mass is the sacrifice of Jesus. The essence of the Mass is that it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus upon the altar. The Body and Blood of Jesus are made present and offered to the Father for our salvation. This is something that has been largely overlooked in the last few decades. There has been much emphasis on the Mass as a community gathering and a meal; while those elements are true, the heart of the Mass is a sacrifice. Recently, there has been a renewed emphasis on the Real Presence (the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus) such as the Eucharistic revival in the U.S., and this is good. However, there is still something deeper for us to grasp, namely, the Mass makes present the sacrifice of Calvary. The Catechism says, “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice” (CCC 1367).

When we come to Mass it is important to remember that we are coming to be present at the sacrifice of Christ. This helps to shape the kind of reverence and love that we bring with us as we approach the Mass. As we deepen our appreciation of this, the Mass become for us far more than merely a Sunday obligation or a community gathering, but it is a real encounter with Christ as He gives Himself up for us. No greater thing takes places on earth, and we have the privilege to be a part of it.