

## SUNDAY 2-A HOMILY

“Live your baptism and spread the light of Christ”

(Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; Psalm 40; 1Cor 1:1-3; John 1:29-34)

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They should have known better. We also should know better.

Live your baptism and spread the light of Christ to others.

When John the Baptist shouted out, “Look, there is the Lamb of God”, they should have known better. That phrase, “Lamb of God”, had echoed throughout Jewish history for centuries. So what did John mean when he called Jesus the ‘Lamb of God’?

John could have meant the Passover Lamb whose blood protected the Hebrew’s from the angel of death and led to their liberation from political oppression and brutal slavery in Egypt. He could also have meant the lamb that was sacrificed every morning and every evening in the Temple for the sins of the people. Then again perhaps he was referring to the ‘scapegoat.’ The Israelites had a celebration in which the people wrote out their sins, put them on the back of a lamb, and drove the lamb out into the desert to ritually take away their sins. Or perhaps he meant the messiah that the prophets spoke about who would come like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. Judas Maccabees, a great conqueror, was likened to a lamb. With that history behind them, they should have known better, but somehow to this day they miss the message.

Only John the Baptist and a couple of his disciples had that kind of faith. Without knowing Jesus personally, John knew who and what he was when a dove descended upon Jesus and remained with him. The dove is a special bird for the Jews, not killed or eaten, a sign of God’s presence. Some First Nations people speak of hearing the spirits enter a lodge at times. John not only heard, but saw, not just a spirit, but THE Spirit of the Creator, alight on Jesus. And he knew - this is the one we must now follow. He is the one who would truly take away the sins of the world; the one true sacrifice that would save us from death; the one who would redeem Israel by his suffering and sacrifice.

The first reading from Isaiah speaks of a mysterious suffering servant who is called and empowered to be light to all nations. We know that person is Jesus Christ, the saviour. The Spirit that he received at his baptism is the breath, the power of God. The thing about our baptism is that we are immersed, filled with that same Spirit of Jesus. We are baptized into, joined to Jesus Christ, through his Body, the Church. That means that these words apply to us – It is we now who are formed in the womb to be God’s servant, to bring people back to God, to raise up the hurting, to restore the addicted and the broken-hearted to God, to be a light to all peoples, spreading salvation to the ends of the earth. At baptism, we are forgiven and empowered to follow Jesus into his new creation, into the Kingdom of God.

That is our mission, our goal – to both experience his salvation (the hymn “Praise My Soul the King of Heaven” speaks of us as “ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven”) and spread that salvation, that light, to others. Salvation is the peace, joy and justice of the kingdom of God. Salvation is the experience of a restored relationship with God. It is the experience of forgiveness, healing and transformation through faith in Jesus Christ, who restored our fallen human nature through his

sacrificial death and resurrection and the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on us.

More than that, we are called to be the community, the people that will bring others back to God. In the words of Isaiah, we are honoured with this mission, and empowered by God to carry it out. We are to raise up the people and restore the tribes through the power of love and forgiveness. We are to do this as servants of God, as baptised Christians.

But there is more - Isaiah goes so far as to say that we are light to all nations, channels of God's salvation to the whole world. Think about this - soak this up! What great dignity and honour is ours; what a great and awesome mission is given to us! We who are baptised into Christ Jesus are to lead the way, through faith and repentance, through our own personal healing, into a new way of life, into a new creation, into the Kingdom of God, right here and right now. Rejoice and exult, O people of God!

Abraham, a man in his 40's, shares his experience of this reality. As a young man, he carried a lot of anger towards his dad, who was a workaholic. Then a friend taught him to pray spontaneously, as well as to pray with the bible. The word of God began to soften his heart. A spiritual director heard his whole story, and put him in touch with passages of Scripture that spoke of God's love for him. Through participation in a Christopher Leadership course he was given greater self confidence.

Friends in a prayer group prayed over him and he experienced release from false pride. He joined a 12 Step support group and experienced healing through the power of fellowship and love as trust and acceptance. Marriage Encounter taught him about feelings and the power of hugging. He now prays each morning the prayer of the poor person who knows he needs God, and weekly shares his faith and feelings with others. He is on a continual healing journey which he gladly shares with others. In fact, he was just recently asked to be a speaker at a 12 step Roundup. Truly he is a light for all, and a channel of God's salvation to others.

Each of us, in our own way, is called to bring the light of salvation to others who are trapped in darkness, sin, addiction and despair. It may be as simple a way as compassionate, non-judgemental listening and gentle sharing of our own experience of healing, that we will reach out to others.

The Eucharist we celebrate is a powerful means by which God strengthens and empowers us to be a light to the nations. We are nourished by God's Word, and given the Body and Blood of Jesus, who is THE Suffering Servant and THE Lamb of God, and who shares that mission with us.

So, live your baptism and spread the light of Christ to others.