

Read

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8,
8-9, 10

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:29-34

LIVING THE WORD

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 15, 2023



REFLECTION

When Abraham brought his only son, Isaac, as an offering to demonstrate his faith, God spared the innocent Isaac and sent a ram to be sacrificed instead (Genesis 22). In Exodus, the blood of a sacrificial lamb marked the lintels of the Israelite's houses to protect their firstborn sons from the angel of death (Exodus 12). In this week's Gospel, John the Baptist reveals the depth of God's love: Jesus is both the Son of God and the Lamb of God. God does not spare his own Son, but instead sends Jesus as a sinless sacrifice to save the guilty.

John's listeners would have also recognized the reference to "the lamb of God" as a reference to the sacrificial lamb and suffering savior foretold in Isaiah 53. From the very beginning of Christ's ministry, it is clear that this is not the victorious conquering messiah for whom many had been hoping. Instead, Christ was to be the man of sorrows who would pay the price for our guilt with his own body (see Isaiah 53:3-6).



ACTION

In this week's Gospel, John the Baptist testifies to his own experience of Jesus, explaining how he recognized Jesus as the long-awaited savior. John's testimony was especially credible because of his reputation for austerity and integrity. This week, ask a Christian you admire for their testimony. How did they come to know Jesus? How has walking with Christ challenged their assumptions and expectations? Think about what you would include if you were asked to share your own testimony of your relationship with Jesus.



Do an image search for artwork of Jesus and John the Baptist and consider how the relationship between them is depicted.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do we recognize the presence of Christ at work in our lives?
- ❖ Why does John (who we know is six months older than Jesus) say that Jesus came after him but existed before him?

Introduction to **ORDINARY TIME** during Winter



The Season

The brief period of Ordinary Time during winter seems a liturgical breather between the seasons of Christmas and Lent. It is much more than this, however. While short in duration, this season bridges the incarnation with the ministry, teaching, passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord. Through key Gospel narratives, we hear the stories of Jesus' first miracles and teaching and we learn that not everyone is open to his message. These are important lessons for us, particularly teens, as we consider the call of discipleship and its consequences in our lives.

For many, the months of January and February are colder outside; the days are shorter, and the pace of life is perhaps a bit slower. It is appropriate, then, to take this winter time as a gift in which to reflect on our own encounter with Jesus, through reflection on the Sunday readings and prayerful consideration of our openness to the message of Christ.

Celebrating Ordinary Time during Winter with Teens

While the pace of winter may be a bit slower for some of us, for teens, classes, activities, athletics, and relationships continue in their normal routines. This produces an opportunity through which to help your teens develop a regular rhythm of Gospel reflection, prayer, and application of faith in their daily lives. Winter is the perfect time to encourage youth to take the Gospel to heart day by day, week by week. The Gospel passages for this season seem perfect to help teens to take on appropriate faith-driven attitudes and action in their lives.

Preparing the Liturgical Environment

Even though we return to green for this brief season, our environment will often be a bit more sparse, reflecting the shortness of daytime sun, and the dormancy of many plants. Consider using a few stems of evergreen or a small evergreen plant in your prayer environment, reminding your teens that Christ's life and love are eternal.



January 15, 2023

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #64A

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:29-34

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In today's Gospel, we hear John the Baptist testify to who Jesus is. Spend time today discussing some details we tend to think of as givens. Explore John's character, highlighting his example of humility and cooperation with God's grace, giving the attention, focus, and credit to God instead of focusing on himself, through a relatable conversation with teens about popularity and authenticity. Discuss how though they may have been related, it probably took some time for John to come to fully, completely, and deeply know that Jesus is the long-awaited messiah. Unpack the significance calling Jesus the Lamb of God by revisiting the story of the first Passover in Exodus and how Catholics understand this in light of Christ and the Eucharist.

Q FOCUS: With humility, John the Baptist tells us who Jesus is.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

From January 18 to 25, the Catholic Church participates in the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with Christian churches around the world. Ecumenism, or the effort to reunite the many different denominations of Christianity, extends from the words of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, as he prayed "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches jointly publish free resources for observing this

annual octave of prayer. Links can be found through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website (www.usccb.org).

Church Teaching Connection

"Ultimately, the lack of a heartfelt and prayerful acknowledgment of our limitations prevents grace from working more effectively within us, for no room is left for bringing about the potential good that is part of a sincere and genuine journey of growth. Grace, precisely because it builds on nature, does not make us superhuman all at once. . . . Unless we can acknowledge our concrete and limited situation, we will not be able to see the real and possible steps that the Lord demands of us at every moment, once we are attracted and empowered by his gift" (*Gaudete et exsultate*, 50).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 1:29-34

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was

that he might be made known to Israel.” John testified further, saying, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► What do you know about John the Baptist?

Our understanding of John the Baptist pulls details from all four Gospels. The main idea is the same: John proclaimed a message of repentance as he baptized people in the Jordan River. All reference Isaiah 40:3, identifying John as the one who prepares the way for the messiah, who humbly professes his unworthiness as he points to the one who will baptize not with water, but the fire of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that descends upon Jesus like a dove.

Only Matthew and Mark mention that John dressed in camel hair and a belt, exactly like the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). Luke skips this detail, but provides John's nativity alongside that of Jesus, identifying their mothers as cousins, telling of how baby John leaped in the womb of Elizabeth in response to Mary's greeting.

If Jesus and John are cousins, many wonder why in the Gospel of John, the Baptist would say he doesn't know him, not once, but twice (John 1:31, 33). Up until this point in their lives, it's possible that John only saw Jesus as his cousin the carpenter but was now coming to a deeper understanding, seeing him in a whole new way, testifying that Jesus is the Son of God. Or perhaps the tradition from which

John the Evangelist was writing this Gospel was not aware of the family connection.

► In your experience, how do you go from knowing about someone to really knowing them deeply?

John's reputation as an outspoken prophet drew people's attention from all over the whole region. His appearance, tone, and message of repentance reminded people of the prophets, so much so that they repeatedly asked if he was one of them or even the long-awaited messiah.

► What temptations arise for someone who suddenly becomes popular or famous? What might help people resist those temptations?

By today's standards, John the Baptist could be considered an influencer. He had a lot of followers and people listened to what he had to say. It could have been easier for John to give the crowds the answer they wanted, even just saying yes to being Elijah or Moses. Instead, he says no. He refuses to be someone he knows he is not. Therein, John models tremendous humility. He acknowledges God as the source of his influence and credits God with his insights. John uses his powers for good, pointing people toward goodness, repentance, and God.

► Who do you know that models humility?

► St. Catherine of Siena said, “Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.” What connections do you see between practicing humility and being authentic?

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 108.

John prophetically prepares the way and deeply understands Jesus as the messiah.

John resisted the lure of popularity, refusing to be someone he knows he is not.

John the Baptist models humility by being who God meant him to be.

Act on the Word

The Lamb of God

For this activity, you will need the equipment necessary to show a brief video clip (about ten minutes, from 15:50 to 23:48) from "Day 34: The Passover Instituted," from Ascension Presents and The Bible in a Year (with Fr. Mike Schmitz). It can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sPdLnUkhRE>. You may also need Bibles to read Exodus 12.

When John sees Jesus coming, he proclaims Christ to be the Lamb of God. We recognize those words as part of our prayer before Communion, but many of us miss the significance of this statement because we don't understand the Jewish context. This activity will help connect Jesus as "the Lamb of God" with what that phrase meant to the Jewish people of Jesus' time.

Ask the teens what they remember about the account of the first Passover with Moses and the Israelites in Egypt. If the teens are unsure, read Exodus 12 aloud together. Check for understanding on the following points: Moses was sent by God to tell Pharaoh to free the enslaved Israelites. When Pharaoh refused, God sent ten plagues, the last of which was the death of the firstborn male. The Israelites were instructed to kill an unblemished lamb, put some of its blood on the doorway, and then consume its meat along with unleavened bread. The blood marked the homes which the angel of death was to pass over. Pharaoh finally, momentarily relented and God's people were set free. The Israelites were to remember all God had done through the ritual celebration of Passover.

Ask the teens to explain what connections they can see between Jesus and the Passover lamb, such as: being saved by the blood of the lamb and being set free (from slavery and sin).

Then, play a clip from the video "Day 34: The Passover Instituted" from Ascension Presents (clip lasts from 15:50 to 23:48). After listening, invite the teens to share their reactions to the connections that were drawn between Jesus, the Eucharist, and the Passover. Talk about how we are brought into the covenant (through our baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) and how we renew the covenant every time we participate in the Eucharist.

Closing Prayer

*Loving and provident God,
you sent your Son into our midst
to bring the good news of the kingdom
and to instill in us a burning desire to
follow him as faithful disciples.*

*Grant that we may be sincere in our hearts
and unflinching in our baptismal commitments.*

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

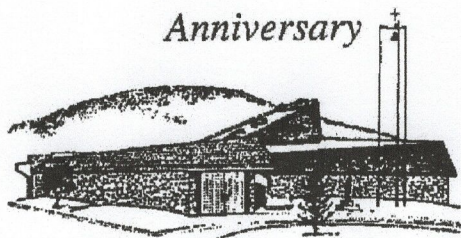
For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.

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