

## Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A 2019-2020

A Message from Fr. Mark

“Behold the Lamb of God”

Happy ordinary time! Now that the Christmas season is over, we enter into the “Ordinary Time” of the church year, during which the priest wears green vestments at Mass. This word “ordinary” refers to the fact that the weeks are “orderly” or “ordinal”. It does not mean that this period is “boring” or “plain” or “unremarkable”! The holiday seasons are very beautiful, but ordinary time is also nice (especially for us priests who have less work to do during ordinary time!)

The readings for this Sunday are actually not ordinary by quite extraordinary! They introduce Jesus Christ as the one who was meant to offer his life in sacrifice for our sins. The first reading is a prophesy from the Book of Isaiah which presents Jesus as the “suffering servant” (Isaiah 49:3-6). The Book of Isaiah has several prophesies like this which describe the expected messiah as a “*servant*” who would suffer for the sins of the people (cf. Isaiah 53). Last Sunday we heard another one of these “Suffering Servant Songs” (Isaiah 42:1-7).

The Responsorial Psalm also a prophesy that the Messiah would offer himself in place of the animal sacrifices which took place daily in the Jerusalem temple: “*Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not; then said I, ‘Behold I come. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.’*” (cf. Psalm 40)

The second reading is extra-ordinary because it proclaims that each of us are called to be holy. Last week I attended a wonderful four-day priest conference, and Dr. Scott Hahn taught us that in the Old Testament the word “holy” almost always refers to the *temple* or to things associated with the temple. It is only after Jesus came that the word holy became “democratized” and it began to be used to refer to people. In the New Testament, St. Paul frequently addresses his letters to the “holy ones” in the various churches. He said that holiness could now be found in the new temple which is “the Body of Christ, the Church” (1Cor. 12:27). Jesus’ body was a temple (John 2:21) and our bodies also should be temples of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 6:19). In our second reading St. Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians with the amazing affirmation that the Corinthians can become holy and sanctified by their association with Christ: “*Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy...*” (1Cor. 1:1)

Finally, our Gospel Reading is most extraordinary today. Although we will usually hear from the Gospel of Matthew this year, the church will occasionally give us readings from the Gospel of John such as this one in which John the Baptist points to Jesus and says “*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*” When John says that Jesus is the Lamb, we immediately remember that at that time lambs were sacrificed in the temple. Every year at Passover the Jews would sacrifice a quarter of a million lambs for the Passover meals of the Jews. All of these sacrifices took place in the holy place, the temple. But Jesus said, “*destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.*” (John 2:19) Jesus was indeed slain, and the temple was indeed destroyed. But now each one of us can partake of the Lamb, become holy, and be built up into a holy temple in the Lord! St. Paul described this amazing truth in his letter to the Ephesians: “*You are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*” (Eph. 2:19-22)

Sincerely,  
Fr. Mark