

It's Not Me, It's Him

This Week's Readings at Mass

- Isaiah 49:3, 5-6 • The servant of the Lord
- 1 Corinthians 1:1-3 • Greeting to the church
- John 1:29-34 • John's testimony to Jesus

All four gospels give an account of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. This story by the author of John's gospel (who was not the same person as John the Baptist) is perhaps the most puzzling of the four. John speaks in somewhat odd and cryptic language, beginning with "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

As Catholics today, we recognize that phrase from mass when the priest holds up the consecrated host. However, readers and hearers of John's Gospel would have understood it as a reference to their Jewish heritage. In Jesus' day, Jews would take a lamb to the Temple in Jerusalem to be sacrificed as an atonement for their sins. When John stated that Jesus was the Lamb of God, he was making quite a claim—that Jesus was taking the place of a sacrificial lamb and that he was taking on the sins of the entire world!

There are suggestions in several of the gospels that some people were beginning to think John the Baptist was the long-awaited Messiah. In this Gospel, John says everything he can to convince people that it isn't him, but Jesus, who deserves that recognition. Clearly, he had a profound experience after baptizing Jesus when the Spirit came "down like a dove from heaven," leaving him without a doubt that Jesus was the Messiah, not him.

Questions of the Week

- 1 If you have children or godchildren who were baptized, what was that experience like for you?



- 2 Jesus is given many different titles in the Gospels: Lamb of God, Lord, Savior, Teacher, Christ, Messiah, etc. What title do you relate to the most? Why?

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