

2nd Sunday (A)

18th January 2026

‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’

Is 49: *I will make you as a light for the nations*

Ps 39: *Behold, I have come, Lord, to do Your will*

1Cor 1: *grace to you & peace from God our Father*

Jn 1:29–34: *Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*

We had readings from Isaiah through almost the whole of Advent; we had Isaiah at Midnight Mass and Christmas morning; we had Isaiah at the Epiphany and again last Sunday for the feast of the Baptism of Jesus; ... and, guess what, we have Isaiah again today (and next Sunday too, and 2 Sundays after that!). Our continued liturgical ‘feed’ from Isaiah highlights more than ever our dependence on him for a full understanding of the Messiah, and of God’s long-term master-plan to bring about salvation for Israel and for the world. Today’s quotation (Is 49) — which we will hear again in Holy Week, by the way — reminds us that this promised Messiah, according to God’s word right back in the 8th-c. BC, was never only “*to bring back the preserved of Israel*,” the faithful remnant, but always, also, to be “*a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth*.”

So: this is to prepare us to hear that the One whom

John points out in the Gospel is the One who will “*take away the sins of the world*,” not just be a Jewish Saviour. Last Sunday’s feast of the Baptism of Jesus, and this Sunday’s Gospel passage from John, form a pair that go neatly together, today’s text filling out the experience of that amazing event, from the perspective of John the Baptist. It’s interesting to note here that John doesn’t claim recognition of the Messiah by His physical appearance. We know that Our Lord Jesus and John were related as cousins via their mothers, Mary and Elizabeth. But that doesn’t mean to say that they’d have seen each other very much. Our Lord’s life pre-Baptism was spent in Nazareth, in Galilee, in the N. of Israel; John the Baptist was brought up in Ein Karem, in the S., just walking distance from Jerusalem. They didn’t live nearby each other. (I saw one of my 2nd cousins on Friday; the last time I saw her, we were both playing as children in her grandfather’s garden in Eastcote, 50yrs ago! — and travel’s a lot better now than in Jesus’s day!) Just because someone’s a cousin, doesn’t mean you’ll recognise them!

No — John’s absolute testimony about Jesus being “the Son of God” follows not from some physical recognition or kinship, but because of the powerful spiritual experience at Jesus’s Baptism. “*I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on Him.*” What must this have been like? It’s hard to imagine precisely, but clearly it was a very moving and holy experience, perhaps rather like a personal Pentecost upon Jesus, that John shares in alongside Him at this moment in the River Jordan. The Holy Spirit “descending like a dove” speaks to us of purity, gentleness, control, and peace, along with a firmness of purpose. The Spirit, who is God as much as Jesus Himself and the Father, is anointing Jesus with power from on high. No wonder, then, that even if no-one else in the vicinity experienced it, John the Baptist would have done. It was “*that He might be revealed to Israel,*” John says, “*I came baptizing with water.*” To recognize the Messiah, to reveal Him, point Him out, and send others His way: this was the whole reason for John’s ministry of baptism and preparing the

people by stirring up their hearts. No wonder, when the time came, God gave John that spiritual gift of insight, *to know who this was*, coming to request baptism at his hands. And yet, if we think about it, so many others were in the crowd at the Jordan River that day: they would have just *passed Jesus by*, and seen nothing extraordinary. Jesus’s presence can go ignored by so many.

When we come to Mass, we know that the Lord is here. In a variety of powerful ways, He is here amongst us, as Vatican II tells us — in the person of the minister; in the Sacred Word of Scripture; the community gathered for the Liturgy; but none so significant as His real and abiding presence in the Eucharist species, His very Body & Blood. And yet, how easy would it be for many to pass Him by. Just as many did not have their hearts open to Him as He came to the River Jordan unannounced, or as He walked the streets of Israel, so too, there are many today who ignore Him present in the Church. As His disciples, *let us not ignore Him*; let us not even *risk* ignoring Him for one day. Most of all, let us not ignore Him in His Eucharistic

presence here in the Chapel, here at Mass. How easy it is, when Jesus has given Himself to us under these humble appearances of bread and wine, that we might come to disregard Him, fail to worship and adore Him here with us. Instead, we must follow John the Baptist's lead, and recognize Him truly as the Son of God. He comes to us under these forms — as a man, who then reduces Himself to the bare forms of the Eucharist — so that He can be accessible to us. Yet the risk is that we become over-familiar and neglectful. Let us renew our reverence and utter respect for Jesus truly and really present here at Mass, and in the Tabernacle of our Chapel. This is the Son of God, and we cannot ever be closer to Him this side of heaven than in His Sacrifice at the Mass, and in Holy Communion. He is, as John testifies, "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.*" We say this, together, at every Mass, re-iterating our faith as we kneel, gazing up and adoring Christ before Communion. This Blessed Sacrament is Jesus, God dwelling with us! — God truly here to help us and be with us!

When we hear those words today at Mass, let's be extra attentive to the sacred presence of the one, true, living God of all things. Let's commit ourselves once more as devout Catholics to loving and reverencing Jesus as "my Lord and my God" ... "my God and my all." "*Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world*" — blessed indeed are we who recognize this astonishing fact of God's love; blessed are those who respond to the holy presence of Jesus here, and allow themselves to hear the call to the supper of the Lamb, the life, the banquet, the feast of heaven.