

ENCOURAGED BY JESUS, THE LAMB OF GOD, TO BE PILGRIMS OF PEACE IN 2023

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – 15 January 2023



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Are others able to see in us, the *presence of the Holy Spirit* remaining in us?
- In what ways are others able to see the *presence of the Holy Spirit* active in our parish community?
- What do we mean when we say that Jesus *is the Lamb of God*?
- In what way could we, as disciples of Jesus, describe ourselves as a *community of lambs*?
- Would we describe ourselves as *pilgrims of peace*?

[we pause and place the questions before God in prayer]

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist became a witness to Jesus, on whom the Holy Spirit descended and remained.

John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as the Lamb of God.
At every Mass, we proclaim Jesus as the Lamb of God.
We say or sing the threefold prayer *Lamb of God*,
followed by the celebrant's words "*Behold the Lamb of God*".

As followers of Jesus, as disciples of Jesus, we are called into a community,
a family that proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God.

We, as disciples of Jesus, are called lambs in John 21:15.

We are invited to read today's Gospel about the Lamb of God.

GOSPEL OF JOHN 1:29-34

*'The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared,
'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
This is he of whom I said,
"After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me
because he was before me."
I myself did not know him;*

*but I came baptizing with water for this reason,
that he might be revealed to Israel.’
And John testified,
‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove,
and it remained on him. I myself did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me,
“He on whom you see the Spirit descend
and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”
And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.’ ‘*

THE IMAGE OF LAMB OF GOD

At every Mass throughout the world, we call Jesus by the name *“Lamb of God”*.
A lamb is not an image of arrogance or high status or wealth.
It is not an image of someone belittling another.

It is a humble image. It is a vulnerable image. It is a sacrificial image.
It is an image of the Passover Lamb.
In working together and facing urgent issues we turn to the humble example of Jesus as Lamb.
And we realize that we might need to sacrifice time and effort to make a difference.

PILGRIM OF PEACE

A pilgrim of peace is also a humble and vulnerable image.
It is not an image of a warlord or invading military force.
It is not an image of abuse or dominance.

We read a recent message of Pope Francis about his upcoming visits
to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.
*“As you know, at the end of the month, I will, at last, be able to go as a pilgrim of peace
to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the hope that violence will cease
in the east of the country, and that the path of dialogue
and the will to work for security and the common good will prevail.
My pilgrimage will continue in South Sudan, where I will be accompanied
by the Archbishop of Canterbury and by the General Moderator
of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.
We desire to unite ourselves to the plea for peace by the country's people
and thus contribute to the process of national reconciliation”*

Let us pause and pray for the Pope’s visit January 31st – February 5th.
[[Programme: Apostolic Journey to the Democratic Republic of the Congo & South Sudan](#)]

WORKING FOR PEACE IN OUR WORLD

Some days ago, on January the 9th, Pope Francis [addressed Members
of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See](#).
He named several nations where peace is needed.
He repeated Church Teaching from the Second Vatican Council in 1965.
*‘For its part, the conciliar Constitution Gaudium et Spes states that
“every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction*

of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and humanity which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation” (No. 80).’

He spoke out once more about the suffering in Ukraine, as he did over 100 times in 2022.

“Today the third world war is taking place in a globalized world where conflicts involve only certain areas of the planet directly, but in fact involve them all. The closest and most recent example is certainly the war in Ukraine, with its wake of death and destruction, with its attacks on civil infrastructures that cause lives to be lost not only from gunfire and acts of violence, but also from hunger and freezing cold.”

“Nor can we forget that war particularly affects those who are most fragile – children, the elderly, the disabled – and leaves an indelible mark on families. Today, I feel bound to renew my appeal for an immediate end to this senseless conflict, whose effects are felt in entire regions, also outside of Europe, due to its repercussions in the areas of energy and food production, above all in Africa and in the Middle East. The present third world war fought piecemeal also makes us consider other theatres of tension and conflict...”

Pope Francis spoke out about human rights, including the violence, abuse and discrimination against women in the world.

“Despite the commitments undertaken by all states to respect human rights and the fundamental freedoms of each person, even today, in many countries, women are considered second-class citizens. They are subjected to violence and abuse, and are denied the opportunity to study, work, employ their talents, and have access to healthcare and even to food. Whereas when human rights are fully recognized for all, women can offer their unique contribution to the life of society and to be the first allies of peace.”

In working for peace today, Pope Francis teaches that

“Building peace requires pursuing justice.”
and *“providing opportunities for everyone to be partners in dialogue.”*

He warns against recent polarization, ideological totalitarianism and ideological colonization in the world.

Let us read what he means by these terms.

“Yet, in recent times, the various international forums have seen an increase in polarization and attempts to impose a single way of thinking, which hinders dialogue and marginalizes those who see things differently. There is a risk of drifting into what more and more appears as an ideological totalitarianism that promotes intolerance towards those who dissent from certain positions

claimed to represent “progress”, but in fact would appear to lead to an overall regression of humanity, with the violation of freedom of thought and freedom of conscience. In addition, more and more resources have been spent on imposing forms of ideological colonization, especially on poorer countries, and directly connecting the provision of economic aid to the acceptance of such ideologies. This has strained debate within international organizations, precluding fruitful exchanges and often leading to the temptation to address issues independently and, consequently, on the basis of power relations.”

On the [19th of January 2014](#), Pope Francis spoke about the Lamb of God.

“We Christians must do this: replace malice with innocence, replace power with love, replace pride with humility, replace status with service. Being disciples of the Lamb means not living like a “besieged citadel”, but like a city placed on a hill, open, welcoming and supportive. It means not assuming closed attitudes but rather proposing the Gospel to everyone, bearing witness by our lives that following Jesus makes us freer and more joyous.”

THIS SUNDAY

On this Sunday we remember that we are called

- to be disciples of Jesus, the Lamb of God
- to be pilgrims of peace
- to serve humbly, to be welcoming and open.

We know that we are vulnerable, and we rejoice that God is our strength.

As lambs and as pilgrims of peace,

- we share the love of God
- and we reach out to people of goodwill, to make a difference.

Let us pray.

Father Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/011523.cfm>

