

Welcome Back to Ordinary Time—What's your Baptismal Mission?

This weekend, the church invites us back to journey once again through a couple of weeks of ordinary time before the Lenten season begins in February.

In this weekend's Gospel, we hear somewhat of an extension of last weekend's Gospel involving Baptism, even though this weekend we hear from John's Gospel. This is one of the times when John's Gospel gets "sprinkled into" the lettered year of the church's reading cycles. This year (Year A) we will read primarily from Matthews's Gospel.

Today, John wants to point out for us Jesus and introduces us so that we recognize him as the Lamb of God and his true presence in their midst. It is a beautiful reflection of that same statement that the priest uses in the prayers just before the reception of Holy Communion, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

We are called to recognize Jesus, and John points out what the true mission of Christ is all about, becoming the sacrificial lamb to save us from our sins and to give us the promise of eternal life.

Jesus knew what his mission was, he accepted it and he lived it.

What is our mission as baptized faithful of the church?

First reading from Isaiah gives us insight as to what our mission should be. That God formed us in the womb and that he made us glorious in the sight of the Lord and has given us strength. He wants us to become a light to the nations and spread the news throughout the world.

We are each given gifts in order to do that—to be Christ's hands and feet. But maybe sometimes we need to be reminded of our mission as well and to use the gifts that God has entrusted to us to spread the Gospel.

In the OCIA classes, I explain why the baptismal font is placed at the entrance of the church as that is where our journey as Christians begin.

Such beautiful symbolism when we make the sign of the cross with the holy water reminding us about our own baptism and our journey as we enter into the presence of God. And then at the Mass, before we receive Christ, we are once again reminded of Christ's presence when we hear the words, "Behold the Lamb of God."

After we receive Christ, we are then sent to go out and do the mission work. And what do most of us do one more time before we leave the Mass? We bless ourselves with the holy water as another reminder of our baptism.

I want to challenge you to really think about that sign of the cross that you make and ask God to give you some clarity on your mission in the world this week. What gifts have you been given through your baptism to us so that you can spread the Gospel?

How is Jesus calling out to you to open your eyes to see a friend who needs forgiveness, in an associate who needs understanding, in a loved one who needs our presence, our time and our gentle care?

My prayer for you this week, is that you can reflect on your baptismal call and use your gifts and your Christian identity to spread the Gospel and be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world.

God's Blessings----Deacon Jim