



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

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"And I, John, have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." John 1:34

John's account of the baptism of the Lord is very different from those of the other three evangelists, and the historical situation explains why. John is very intent upon counteracting a movement that regarded John the Baptist as superior to Jesus. So he does not narrate the baptism event; instead, he puts the meaning of the baptism into John the Baptist's testimony. He has him state quite clearly: *"The reason why I came ... so that he [Jesus] might be made known."*

Having established the true Christian view of the relationship between Jesus and the Baptizer, the gospel writer concentrates on demonstrating that Jesus is, indeed, the *Servant of God* as foretold in Isaiah's Servant Songs. The voice from heaven instructs the Baptizer that the one on whom the Spirit descends is the Chosen One; he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, foreshadowing the Pentecost event, not to come until after the resurrection of Jesus.

The central mission of John the Evangelist, then, is to show that God's plan to redeem the world will be worked out through the Chosen One, Jesus. The Spirit which *"came to rest on him"* will abide with him throughout his ministry. *"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* Notice John uses the word *"sin"* in the singular. *Sin, not sins.* The *sin* of the world is original sin. When God created the world, as we learn in Genesis, *"God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was good."* Gen 1:4 Think of this as the *original good* that blanketed all of the earth, existing before sin. Jesus was sent to restore the world to that original good.

The challenge particular to this reading is that it is not a straightforward narrative account of an event. Instead, we hear of the event indirectly and its meaning, through John the Baptist's testimony. But that is inspiration for all Christians. After being inspired by the telling of the event, we encounter the mystical Christ. Then we are called to become the messenger, proclaiming the Good News, passing it on generation to generation.

As you reflect on this Gospel, picture the story as you recall your own encounter with the mystical Christ. Reflect deeply, slowly and carefully, allowing the natural breaks in the passage to work their full effect. Notice that two time frames are indicated in the reading: In the first half, John is speaking at the baptismal event and his own mystical encounter with Christ. In the second half, John gives testimony as he takes that encounter into the mission field.

The last sentence of this passage expresses the very conviction the Holy Spirit will plant in your heart after hearing "the evidence." Pray that you might be inspired to say, *"I have seen for myself ... 'This is God's Chosen One!'"*

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward 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 Gospel of the Lord