

**2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A) Homily
Saint William, Champion | January 19, 2020
Is 49:3, 5-6 | 1 Cor 1:1-3 | Jn 1:29-34**

For anyone who enjoys a good story, whether it's in a book, or on the TV, or on the big screen at the theatre, there is a new challenge. It's all too easy these days to find reviews available so quickly and easily on the internet. And the reviews often come with a warning: CONTAINS SPOILERS! Put another way – don't read the review if you don't want them to spoil all the surprises...

This weekend, we find John the Baptist with the ultimate spoiler. In one sentence, he outlines Jesus' mission right from the start. He identifies Him as "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

For most of us, the words "Lamb of God" bring a number of images to mind. But for me, one of the images that comes to mind is from a painting that has hung on the wall of my Mom's home for over twenty years now. Mom had been involved in a serious accident at work. As she was waiting for help – she found herself praying to the Lamb of God. And

when she was recovering, she acquired the painting, which remains special to our family. There are a number of elements that stand out. There is a spotless lamb, resting peacefully in the beautiful sun, and yet he is lying on top of a crown of thorns, which rest on an area of darkness.

When I look at that picture, it's difficult to ignore that area of darkness. But it reminds me that the darkness of sin is a very real thing that is present in our lives, regardless of who we are. If we think about the Great Commandment, we sin whenever we fail to love God or whenever we fail to love our neighbor. When we look at our lives honestly, even though we often consider sin something that other people do, we have to admit to ourselves that we are guilty too. Even on a good day, when it seems easy to think at all is well, we never quite get everything right. Maybe I haven't done something to hurt someone directly, but there are things that I should have done but didn't. It isn't difficult to get caught up in our own little world, and become indifferent to the people around us. Sin often sneaks into our lives, a little bit at a time.

Sin is very much a part of our humanity. Even if we can honestly claim that our personal behavior is sinless, we still share responsibility for sin as part of a family, a group, a community, and even as part of a country. How about the sins of racism, injustice, poverty, war, or pollution? I could go on and on, but I know that just thinking about it makes me uncomfortable. It's so easy to want to sweep all these things under the rug and pretend they don't exist.

SPOILER ALERT: Today we are reminded that despite the darkness of sin, we have reason for hope and joy, as we reflect on the message of John the Baptist: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus came to earth to share the wonders of His love, not just by taking our human form, but also by taking away the sin that separates us from each other and from our heavenly Father. Why? Because He loved us and saw beauty worth saving, worth His sacrifice. As we watch Jesus begin His public ministry, everything he does is all about His mission to save us from sin.

In a matter of minutes, we will celebrate that sacrifice as Jesus' body is broken for us and His blood is poured out to wash away our sins. Father will say, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." In turn, we will respond, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." As the Blessed Sacrament is divided up to be distributed, we will sing, "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world... Have mercy on us... Grant us peace." Many of us have spoken or sung these words hundreds of times. Today, perhaps we can slow down and listen, and savor the richness of their meaning.

As we begin the new year, may we come to a new understanding of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. May we realize that there are no limits to what sins Jesus can take away. May we allow Him to take away all of our sins, especially those we struggle to recognize and admit. I can't think of a better ending to our story than that.