

The Lamb of God – (Latin = *Agnus Dei*) The Lamb Throughout Scripture = Jesus

After the sign of peace, we launch into the beautiful and often sung prayer of the Lamb of God. During Advent and Lent (seasons of preparation/penance), we have been singing this in Latin where *Agnus Dei* simply means the Lamb of God in English. This image of the Lamb of God is actually all throughout Scripture, and it can help us understand the richness and depth of this prayer during the Mass!

One of the first covenant promises God made with His people on this earth was a covenant promise between Him and Abraham in the Old Testament. God challenges his faith by asking Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, and as Isaac and Abraham are climbing the mountain, we hear them talking about a lamb. Isaac asks his father, “where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” And Abraham replies to this question, “God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son” (**Genesis 22:7-8**). However, when God intervenes and stops Abraham, they don’t find a lamb, but there is a ram nearby stuck in a bush. Therefore, God did not provide a lamb like Isaac and Abraham expected.

Fast forward now to Moses and God’s chosen nation of Israel who are in slavery to Egypt. The way they escape the Egyptians is through the miracle of Passover. The central action that God asked the Israelites to do was for each family to sacrifice a young, pure lamb. They were supposed to spread its blood on the doorposts of their homes as well as they were required to eat of the lamb as well (**see Exodus 12:21-51**). This was their freedom, their salvation, and God’s power and love towards them through this miracle, and the Israelites continued to celebrate the Passover every single year after that occasion (and the Jewish people still celebrate this today!).

Fast forward once again to Jesus eating the last supper with his apostles (we will not spend too much time on the prophets in the Old Testament talking about the lamb, such as **Isaiah 53:7**). Jesus is eating the Israelite/Jewish feast of Passover! However, we notice that one thing is missing during their meal. Where is the lamb that is required to be sacrificed and eaten? There is no mention of that part of the Passover meal when Jesus is eating with his apostles at the last supper. However, Jesus stops everything and declares, “Take this bread, eat of it, this is my body given up for you. Do this in memory of me.” Jesus is the new lamb of God! Jesus is the new Passover lamb! Jesus offers himself on the Cross for our sins, and He is the perfect sacrifice of love for our sake (**1 Peter 1:19**). This same Jesus becomes present to us every single time we “Do this in memory of Him” like He established during the last supper. The Mass is a new Passover meal, and we get to celebrate this salvation and this outpouring of God’s power and love from the perfect lamb every single Sunday!

Just in case you are still having trouble, here are two last encouragements to help you see this in Scripture as well as to help you pray during each Mass. John the Baptist points directly at Jesus and says, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!” (**see John 1:29**). This is very close to our exact prayer during Mass! Also, in the book of Revelation, at least two things are remarkable in this regard. First, there is a lamb that is standing as if slain, but this lamb is also surrounded by all the saints and angels in heaven who are worshipping it (**Revelation 5**). Jesus rises from the dead, but He still has his wounds in His resurrected body. Finally, the lamb in Revelation is also hosting a wedding feast. What a funny image! But of course, it is not literal. The lamb is Jesus. The wedding feast is heaven (**Revelation 19**). Mass is the meal, and it is our foretaste of the wedding banquet of heaven! Let’s thank God for these beautiful prayers during the Mass, and ask Him to help us understand that Jesus is the Lamb of God. He pours Himself out for us, and He is fully present at Mass to pour Himself out to us every single Sunday. Amen.