

January 15, 2023
Cycle A – 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Psalm: 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:29-34

Notes from Bishop Peter

THEME: JESUS TAKES OUR SINS ON HIMSELF AND
UNMASKS SCAPEGOATING.

1. The lectionary presents the scene of Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River, this time from the Gospel of John.
 - a. Jesus is humble – he empties himself, standing in solidarity with sinners, the sinless one in the sinner's stead.
 - b. When he rises from the water, the Holy Spirit descends on him and after his Father raises him from the dead, he sends his HS to form the church and to enter into each baptized person. Thus we can think and act like Jesus himself though we must constantly be aware of the evil of which we are capable.
2. During his horrible passion, Jesus becomes the scapegoat because God places on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53) What does this mean?
 - a. (I got this from the internet.) "In the Bible, a scapegoat is an animal that is ritually burdened with the sins of others, and then driven away. The concept first appears in the Book of Leviticus, in which a goat is designated to be led into the desert to carry away the sins of the community." The goat eventually dies.
 - b. Moreover, Jesus becomes the scapegoat of the people's frustrations because they expected a glorious Messiah who would drive out the Romans, restore home rule, and end the world, rewarding the just and condemning sinners. Because Jesus didn't meet their expectations, they clamored for his death. As usually happens in these cases, the oppressors will feel good only for a while.
3. Scapegoating is a tendency deep in the human psyche to the point that people often are unaware of it. Here are some examples:

- a. Nero and the Christians of Rome: He blames them for the fire that destroyed a good part of Rome and the people believed him. Christians were rounded up and tortured mercilessly.
 - b. The most notorious is Hitler blaming the Jews for the economic problems Germany faced following the First World War. Once the Jews were scapegoated, the people on the other side could do whatever they wanted to them. This led to the horrible Holocaust during which 6 million Jews were slaughtered.
 - c. Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia made the Muslims of Bosnia the scapegoats for the anger of his people against them after they lost to the Muslims in 1389. They then invaded Bosnia and massacred thousands of helpless Muslims.
 - d. Here in our own country blacks became scapegoats for poor economic conditions in the 1920's and 30's. This led to outbreaks of violence against them and the creation of the KKK. Thus those in the "offended" and powerful group could justify any action against black people including thousands of human persons being lynched.
 - e. What about today? Certain political figures and others have made immigrants, in particular undocumented ones, scapegoats of economic problems and threats to society. Once again, this results in negative actions against them.
 - f. On a lesser scale, that's what happens when people gossip and stab others in the back. "Where two or three are gathered, there are victims." (From Bishop Barron's book, *Seeds of the Word*, p. 45)
4. Who has an answer to this syndrome? Jesus unmasks it because he chose to identify with those who are being scapegoated, having suffered the same fate. "Whatsoever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, you do to me." To Jews, to Blacks, to Muslims, to Christians, to immigrants, to fellow workers and family members – you do to me... **WE MUST RESPECT ONE ANOTHER IF WE WANT TO BE JESUS' TRUE DISCIPLES.**
- a. (As an aside, Bishop Barron states that human sacrifice perpetrated by the Romans and the Aztecs stopped when they were confronted by the crucified Jesus who sacrificed himself for all human beings past, present and future.)

5. Now we come to the Eucharistic part of our liturgy. It is Jesus who takes on himself the sin of the whole human race and who continues to confront those who make scapegoats of others, blaming them for social or economic problems.

Amen.