

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

We begin this new season of Ordinary Time, which spans the weeks from the Baptism of the Lord until Ash Wednesday, with the poetry of Isaiah's second "Suffering Servant Song." We heard the first one last Sunday. The Lord has chosen a special servant to be and to show the divine glory in the world.¹ This was probably written at the end of the Babylonian exile as the captives were being brought back to Israel. The communities were still very poor and labored under many difficulties and afflictions, so this message of comfort was well received.⁵

3The Lord said to me: You are my servant, Israel, While it is hard to tell just who the servant is in this case, the solution, perhaps, is in the mysterious fact that the Servant is the gathering of all Israelites, but especially of the saintly members of the people; such a person certainly has a mission to each sinful member of Israel.⁴ We also see the Servant as Jesus, the Messiah, for the Servant is not only to restore Israel but also to be a light to the nations and extend God's salvation to the ends of the earth.² Jesus himself clearly identified himself as the Servant.⁴ Of course, we too are called to be God's servants for the sake of the world.² **through whom I show my glory.** Through this servant God makes his holiness manifest.⁶

5Now the Lord has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, that Jacob This was the father of the 12 tribes and so his name is a common designation for Israel as a chosen nation.⁶ **may be brought back to him** This means that the Jewish people will be brought back to God. and Israel Israel is a name change given to Jacob and is another name that represents the people of Yahweh.⁶ **gathered to him; and I am made glorious in the sight of the Lord, and my God is now my strength!**
6It is too little, the Lord says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; This song presumes that the Servant has already been at work and is now discouraged by the fruitlessness of his ministry. God responds, not by canceling, but by *widening* even further the Servant's apostolate: Go to the Gentiles.⁴ **I will make you a light to the nations,** By suffering through the miseries of being exiled from their homeland and still being faithful to God, the servant will be a healing visible light to all nations, both Jew and Gentile.³ **that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.** Christ's coming for us is not limited just to the people who have lived up until now, but is also for all those still far off in time and place. Throughout the history of God's people—whether that term is intended to refer to Israel or the new Israel, which is the Church—we must remember that God makes us instruments in his universal plan. We have a tendency to forget that God gives us what He gives us not merely to favor us, but to make us instruments in His universal plan.⁵

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

1Paul, called Paul refers here to his divine calling on the road to Damascus. God calls all men to faith, to grace, to holiness and to heaven.⁸ **to be an apostle** Paul calls himself an apostle 35 times⁸ and he lists apostleship among the charismatic offices of the Church. The two major requirements, in Paul's way of thinking, for being an apostle, are first, a vision of the Risen Jesus—whence Paul's stress that he saw Jesus on the road to Damascus and second, a commission by Jesus to preach.⁴ The essential meaning of the word "apostle" is "one sent forth."⁶ **of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,** Paul followed the ancient form of letters and identified the senders in the beginning.⁷ This letter is from Paul and Sosthenes, a Christian well known to the Corinthians.⁴

He may have been the scribe who actually wrote the letter down.⁸ He is called a “brother” since Christians become kin to one another, sharing through faith a fellowship that compares in depth with family ties.⁷

2to the church of God that is in Corinth, The Corinthians are reminded that they were not a church unto themselves but were part of the universal Church. Every particular parish or group of Christians is simply the local representation of the worldwide community of the baptized. We belong to one Church which reaches to the ends of the earth.¹ Corinth was located on the shortest route from Europe to Asia and the town had a reputation as a center of pleasure and vice. This was not a promising community for evangelization.⁶ **to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus,** These are the people who have been incorporated by baptism into Christ.⁴ **called to be holy,** All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to holiness.⁹ **with all those everywhere** (including us) **who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.**

3Grace to you and peace This gift of the Holy Spirit is described by St. Augustine as “serenity of mind, tranquility of soul, simplicity of heart, bond of love, and union of charity.”⁸ **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Grace and peace are gifts which summarize the messianic blessings bestowed in Christ. Paul brings together the usual greeting among the Greeks, grace, and that used by the Jews, peace, reflecting the unity of all those who profess to believe in the one Father and in the one Lord.⁷ Verse 3 is used as the prayer at the beginning of the Eucharist at mass.

John 1:29-34

*John the Evangelist, who wrote this gospel, had been a disciple of John the Baptist before he followed Jesus. The Jews considered the offering of Isaac by Abraham to be the pivotal event in salvation history. In that story, Abraham says to Isaac as they ascend Mount Moriah (which the Jews have always identified as the future site of Jerusalem), “God will provide himself the **lamb** for a burnt offering.” In fact, rather than requiring the sacrifice of Isaac, God sent an angel to stay Abraham’s hand and to point out a **ram** caught by his horns in a thicket to offer instead. In meditating on this event, the Jewish Rabbis suggest that God has still to provide the **lamb**, since it was a **ram** that Abraham was given to offer. Further, the rabbinic theory goes that the morning and evening sacrifice of a **lamb** in the Temple was intended to remind Israel of the offering of Isaac and to reinforce the promise that one day God Himself would provide the **lamb** for a holocaust or burnt offering. Interestingly, the Rabbis point out that the morning and evening sacrifices were announced by the blowing of a **ram’s** horn trumpet.⁵*

29John the Baptist John was the last of the Old Testament prophets.⁶ **saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God,** There is sheer wonder in the phrase “The Lamb of God,” which John used twenty-nine times in the book of Revelation and it has become one of the most precious titles of Christ. It sums up the love, sacrifice, suffering, and triumph of Jesus Christ.³ While some think that John’s use of the term “Lamb of God” for Jesus may refer to the Passover lamb, the primary reference here is to the Suffering Servant who is described as being like a lamb led to the slaughter. The Passover lamb had no connection to sin, but the Servant bore the guilt of us all.² **who takes away the sin of the world.**

30He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ By saying that Jesus existed before him, even though he was born after him, John shows us the divinity of Christ, who was generated by the Father from all eternity and born of the Virgin Mary in time.¹¹

³¹I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.” Here John does not mean to deny his personal knowledge of Jesus, but to make it plain that God revealed to him the moment when he should publicly proclaim Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, and that he also understood that his own mission had no other purpose than to bear witness to Jesus Christ.¹¹

³²John testified further, saying, “I saw the spirit come down like a dove In Palestine, the dove was a sacred bird and it was not hunted or eaten. The rabbis said that the spirit of God moved and fluttered like a dove. The picture of the dove was one that Jesus knew and loved.³ Christian iconography traditionally uses a dove to suggest the Spirit.⁹(CCC701) from heaven This happened at the Baptism of Jesus which initiated his manifestation to Israel and prefigured the effects of sacramental Baptism.¹⁰ and remain This Greek expression which is also translated “dwell” or “abide” is used often in John for the enduring bond between the Father and the Son and also for the indwelling of the Trinity in the believer.¹⁰ upon him.

³³I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God.⁹(CCC1286)

³⁴Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.” John’s story of the baptism is considerably different from what we find in the other three gospels because his purpose is to refute the view held by some that John the Baptist was superior to Jesus. Thus, this writer does not give us an account of the particulars of Jesus’ baptism. Rather, he has John the Baptist give testimony to the meaning of the event. Almost the entire reading is composed of the Baptist’s words, which clearly say that the revelation of Jesus as the Lamb of God was the sole purpose of John’s mission. The gospel writer also concentrates on demonstrating that Jesus is indeed the servant of God described in the servant songs of Isaiah.¹

Some of the material for this commentary has been taken from: (1) “Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers:1995” by Aelred Rosser, (2) “Workbook For Lectors and Gospel Readers:1999” by Lawrence E. Mick, (3) “The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study” by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (4) “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” (5) The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst and Tim Gray, (6) “Dictionary of the Bible” by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (7) “The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Corinthians” by Mary Ann Getty, (8) “The Navarre Bible: Corinthians,” (9) “Catechism Of The Catholic Church,” (10) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John”, and (11) “The Navarre Bible: St. John”.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.