

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the Gospel today, we have Jesus beginning his public ministry. The poinsettias are gone, the Christmas lights are down, Christmas trees are put away and the Christmas season is over. Now we begin our reflection on the public life and ministry of Jesus which will eventually lead us to his passion, death and resurrection. In the Gospel of today, John the Baptist introduces Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

In the days of Jesus, the Jews sacrificed lambs in the temple. On the Feast of Atonement, everyone brought a lamb and imposed their hands on the beast, meaning to transfer their sins, and then the beast was slain on the altar. So the lamb took the sins of the people and gave up its life. That is what Jesus did. He took the burden of our sins and sacrificed his life. That is why John said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” This is the best news—that Jesus takes away our sins. There is, however, one hitch: before he can take away our sins, we need to acknowledge our sins. That can be hard because there is a tendency in all of us to deny sins. Many of us take that approach and deny sins—and put the blame on somebody else. It was part of human nature ever since the fall of Adam and Eve.

Eve disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree. When God came she hid herself, and God asked her if she ate of the forbidden tree and what was her reply? “The Serpent tricked me and I ate. So the fault is not mine but of the serpent.” When God asked Adam, what did he say? “The woman you gave me gave it to me, and I ate it.” Here we see denial of sin and responsibility. We can be truly free only when we acknowledge our sins and confess them.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, died for our sins. He held nothing back. He gave himself completely for us. Jesus was a good steward of God his Father. With the beginning of his public ministry, he initiated God’s kingdom here on earth. All of us have a role in building up God’s kingdom as good stewards. God has called us to build His kingdom here on earth. He has given us gifts of time, talent and treasure to help us in that work. As baptized persons, we make up the Church. Church is not a building, but it comes from a Greek word *Ecclesia*, which means “those called out” or “people of God.” So, if we make up the Church, then when we say that the Church has the responsibility to spread the Gospel, to worship God, to educate children, to care for the poor and needy, we are saying that we have a responsibility to spread the Gospel, to worship God, to educate our children, and to care for the poor and the needy. This is how we build up God’s kingdom. That should be our priority.

A professor once showed his students a jar filled with golf balls and asked them, “Is this jar full?” All the students said “Yes” without hesitation. Then he took a bag of little pebbles and poured that into the jar, and the pebbles filled the empty spaces between the golf balls. He asked the students the same question.

The students said “Yes.” Then he took a bag of fine sand and poured into the jar. It filled the empty spaces between the pebbles, and the professor asked the students the same question, and the students once again said “Yes.” Then the professor took a bottle of beer and poured that into the jar. It filled the jar. Now it was truly full.

The golf ball stands for the most important things in our life. The pebbles stand for less important things, and the sand stands for all the other things such as our gossiping, our TV time, etc. . . . If you want the golf ball to go into the jar, it has to go in first. Then one of the students asked the professor what the beer meant. The professor said, “Oh I poured that into the jar to show that no matter how busy we are on our life, we will always have time for a glass of beer.” We need to have first things first in our life. Stewardship is all about putting God, his kingdom and his church first in our lives. The ministry that Jesus began continues today through you and me. As good stewards, let us promote and proclaim God’s kingdom.