

Readings Jan 18th Discussion Notes

These readings emphasize how we identify who Jesus is and, subsequently, who we are called to be.

Overview: The Call to Witness

The central theme of this Sunday is **testimony**. In the First Reading, the "Servant" is identified by God; in the Second Reading, Paul identifies himself as "called"; and in the Gospel, John the Baptist provides the definitive testimony that Jesus is the "Lamb of God."

Reading I: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Key Concept: *The Servant's Universal Mission.*

In this "Servant Song," we hear of a figure formed by God from the womb. While this initially refers to the nation of Israel or a specific prophet, the Church sees its ultimate fulfillment in **Jesus**.

- **The Shift:** God says it is "too little" for the Servant only to save Israel. The mission is expanded: the Servant will be a **"light to the nations."**
- **OCIA Connection:** For those in OCIA, this highlights that God's call is never just for our own private benefit. Like the Servant, our journey of faith is meant to eventually radiate outward to others.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40

Key Concept: *The Disposition of the Heart.*

The refrain, *"Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will,"* is the perfect response to God's call.

- **Obedience over Ritual:** The Psalmist notes that God does not primarily desire "sacrifice or offering" (external rituals) but "ears open to obedience" and a heart where the law is written.
- **Application:** It reminds candidates and catechumens that the goal of OCIA is not just learning "about" God or performing rituals, but a total self-offering to God's plan.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Key Concept: *Called to be Holy.*

St. Paul opens his letter by establishing two things: his own identity (called to be an apostle) and the identity of the community in Corinth.

- **Sanctified in Christ:** Paul tells the Corinthians—a community famously struggling with many sins—that they are "sanctified" and "called to be holy."
- **Universal Church:** He reminds them they are linked to "all those everywhere" who call on the name of Jesus. This reinforces the "Catholic" (universal) nature of the Church.

The Gospel: John 1:29-34

Key Concept: *Behold the Lamb of God.*

This is a pivotal moment in the Gospel of John. John the Baptist sees Jesus and gives him a title that we still use at every Mass: **The Lamb of God.**

- **The Lamb:** This title connects Jesus to the **Passover Lamb**, whose blood saved the Israelites from death, and the **Sacrificial Lamb** of the Temple. John identifies Jesus as the one who takes away the sin of the world—not through a political revolution, but through sacrifice.
- **The Descent of the Spirit:** John explains that he recognizes Jesus because he saw the Holy Spirit "remain" upon Him. This "remaining" is a key theme in John's Gospel; it signifies a permanent, ontological union between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.
- **The Witness:** John's role is purely to point away from himself and toward Jesus. He concludes with the ultimate testimony: *"He is the Son of God."*

Discussion Points

1. **The Titles of Jesus:** What does the title "Lamb of God" mean to you personally? How does it change your perspective of Jesus to see him as a sacrifice rather than just a teacher?
2. **Recognition:** John the Baptist says twice, *"I did not know him."* He knew Jesus was his cousin, but he didn't "know" Him as the Messiah until the Spirit revealed it. How has your "knowing" of Jesus changed since you started OCIA?

3. **The "New Song":** The Psalm mentions a "new song" in the mouth of the believer. How is your life starting to sound "new" or different as you grow in faith?
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