

Homily Sunday Week 2 A – 2020

Fr Tim

John 1:29-34

“John said, ‘Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.’ ... I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him.”

Misleading signs, easy to misunderstand.

There is a supermarket in South Wales with the sign over one of the drinks sections that says in Welsh, *“Alcohol Free,”* underneath in English the (mis)translation says, *“Free Alcohol.”*

Amusing signs - *“Slow Children,”* and in a pub over the fireplace: *“Warning, fire may be hot.”*

Titles of Jesus, Lamb of God (sacrifice, redeemer - the one to save us from our sins), Son of God, Light of the World, Word of God.

Signs can be words or symbols or things. We can understand them and follow them, understand and ignore them or even misunderstand them completely.

John the Baptist is a signpost pointing to Jesus - so can we be. He prepares them by calling them to repentance and then points to Jesus and hands over to Him. Some of Jesus’s first disciples were followers of John. They saw the signs and followed.

Signs and symbols are useful, but they are not the thing they point to. We have the reality that is pointed to. John’s baptism was symbolic - it didn’t actually cleanse anyone from sin, only God can forgive sins.

Our baptism, the new baptism introduced by Jesus Himself, changes our reality as the Holy Spirit Himself comes to live in us. Quite rightly we say we are re-born, we become new, Spirit-filled people, forgiven and cleansed of sin.

The old symbolic act of St. John the Baptist gives way to the new reality, the sacrament, known by faith. As the Benediction hymn says:

*“Types and shadows have their ending,
for the newer rite is here.
Faith, our outward sense befriending,
makes the inward vision clear.”*

Temple sacrifice - the lamb sacrificed every morning and evening. This was the “*type and shadow*,” the symbol. Jesus, the Lamb of God came to offer the sacrifice that does indeed bring forgiveness. No longer a symbol, but the reality, that we receive through the new baptism, the “*newer rite*,” which has the power to convey the reality of the grace of actual forgiveness.

The ministry of John the Baptist prepared for and pointed to the ministry of Jesus. In a similar way, our lives are to offer testimony to who we know Jesus to be for us and for the world. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. How does the witness of our lives give testimony to the reconciling presence of Christ?

John the Baptist’s sense of purpose is clearly identified in this reading: he baptized in order to prepare for and make known the ministry of the One who was to follow. John’s witness is an excellent example of what it means to be a disciple. By our Baptism, we are called to make Jesus known to all the world by our words and by the witness of our lives.

Larry, the driver of a bus I regularly catch, is always ready with a smile and an amusing comment. He knows many of his passengers by name and chats to us as he drives along - cheers everyone up. On his days off another driver who, sadly, has been nicknamed “Grumpy” makes everyone miserable (grumpy), he is reluctant even to say hello.

The light of Jesus shines in us. And through us. How shall we become transparent to that light? What sort of lives do we need to live, that others will find Jesus in and through us?