

## Fr. John's Homily for 1-14-24, Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

JMJ CHS

Yes, the Christmas season came to a very quiet ending last Monday with the feast of the Baptism of Jesus. It was my day off and while I often say Mass in the rectory on that day, this time I excused myself. But you know, in a sense, it is almost a parish feast day here at Holy Spirit because, well, if you look right over there, we see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit as a dove hovering over the baptism of Jesus. That's the only time and place we see this in the Bible.

It wasn't part of the plan for my Christmas homilies to focus on particular words, it just kind of happened that way. Remember the word *myth*, then there was *epiphany*, today in my bulletin article I focus on the word *ordinary*, as in Ordinary Time. But there is yet one more word to consider, and it was a part of the baptism of Jesus, and today's Gospel.

One simple, archaic old-fashioned word. *Behold*. It's not a word we use that often anymore, but maybe we might in some rare circumstance. Nevertheless, there at the Jordan River, John, seeing Jesus, says to two of his own disciples, "Andrew, Phillip, behold, *The Lamb of God. It is him you must follow now. He must increase, while I must decrease.*"

In its most basic sense, the word behold simply means to look. Ah, look, what a beautiful sunset. O, look, a beautiful Corvette. Wow, look at that beautiful girl.

But it seems to me that the word behold is reserved for special circumstances. Something we are looking at or considering, not casually, but with deep reverence and awe, pondering the mystery.

Three examples came to mind when I first put these thoughts together. One is a passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. It speaks about the end of times. It was included in *Handel's Messiah*. "Behold, *I tell you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.*"

Another one that came to mind was from Mary. That famous and all important *Fiat* to the angel Gabriel. "Behold, *the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy word.*"

And then finally, again, "Behold, *the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.*" Words immortalized by the baptist there at the Jordan and now used in every Catholic Mass celebrated every day, all around the world, just before we receive Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ. Our spiritual food.

So please, don't take that simple word "*Behold*" for granted.

I would also like to say a little bit about our second reading today. It, too, comes from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Unfortunately it's a bit edited; a bit chopped up. I don't know why 'the powers that be' would do that but, it kind of *neutralized* it. But we can rectify that. Every passage happens within a context. We have something that comes before and after that we should consider.

## Fr. John's Homily for 1-14-24, Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

In today's passage Paul reminds us that our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit. Treat them accordingly. Do not be immoral. Well, that's all very nice, but it's not very helpful for us as it stands by itself. And so I feel I would be guilty of pastoral malpractice if I didn't tell you all of what Paul said.

He said that those who are immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God. Those are pretty serious words. So what kind of morality is he talking about? He tells us. "*Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*"

Now again, if we preachers don't point this out as truth, as the message of the Gospel, it seems to me we would be doing a grave disservice to those brothers and sisters who hear our words. The admonition is to preach the truth, in love, in season and out of season. Because, like God, it should also be our desire that none should be lost.

Some *YouTube* commentator pointed out that this reading only comes up once every three years in Cycle B. How interesting. What timing. How ironic. Is this one of those *God Incidences*?

I am speaking about that hot topic out there right now. That so-called authorization, maybe even a command, that we priests should be blessing homosexual relationships. It is currently dividing the Catholic world. Some see it as a breakthrough; the Church catching up with modern times. Others say, "You've got to be kidding." Have we been wrong for the past 2,000 years? Did Paul somehow get mistranslated when he wrote that letter to the Corinthians?

I'll bet that many priests have wondered what they would say and what they would do if indeed they were approached by a same-sex couple. I have asked myself, and my answer is yes, I would bless them. I would never refuse to bless anybody.

But I would bless them on my own terms. And it might sound something like this. I actually use this prayer a lot for many different circumstances. "*Dear Lord, pour out your precious blood, sprung from your wounded side, upon these two beloved children of God. Cleanse them from the top of their heads to the bottom of their feet, washing away any stain of sin or illness or injury or defilement.*"

And then, maybe silently, I would pray another type of prayer. I would add, "*and if there are any unclean spirits afflicting these two children, I bind you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and by my priestly authority, I command you to go to the foot of the altar and present yourself before .....the Lamb of God.*"

And as *frosting on the cake*, as it were, I might be inclined to give them a homework assignment. Go home, open your Bibles, and read the very last line of John, chapter 8, verse 11.

~Fr. John