



Dear Parishioners,

On any given day as we are out and about, we might see hundreds of people coming toward us. Most of them we pass by and hardly notice. Perhaps we might notice a flashy scarf or a designer handbag. We might notice a tired or worn face or a furtive look. We might notice someone struggling to walk steadily or perhaps someone with a seeing-eye dog. What we notice tends to be external marks or traits. A casual passing by would rarely, if ever, bring home to us an inner quality of a person ... a set of moral values ... a family tree. In this weekend's Gospel, John the Baptist notices Jesus. But he doesn't note that He has long hair or a beard, or that He has a seamless cloak and sandals, or that He has a crowd of people around Him. John gets to the heart of things – he notices who Jesus is.

This weekend's Gospel is a testimony of what John has come to know about who Jesus is: Lamb of God ... One who forgives sins ... One who pre-exists ... One who is Spirit-filled ... One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit ... the Son of God. This kind of recognizing an identity does not come from a casual passing by. Instead it comes from a deep inner connection and relationship ... the kind of relationship John has with Jesus. John has been noticing Jesus for a long time. But John's testimony does not exhaust the richness of Jesus' identity. There is even more.

John the Baptist unveils in his relationship to Christ the posture of the Church ... which is to go from not knowing to seeing to testifying. We don't come to a onetime understanding of Christ. Our whole lives are spent beholding the Lamb of God, and in this very encounter we receive the Spirit and are commissioned to carry on Jesus' saving mission. The surprise of this Gospel is that, as God the Father entrusted to the beloved Son the work of salvation, by baptizing us with the Holy Spirit, **Jesus entrusts to us this same saving mission**. The mystery of who Jesus is continues to be revealed to us and through us today. What more are we discovering? What more are we revealing? Is Jesus more than just a passerby to us?

Our baptismal task is to deepen continually our own understanding of who Jesus is and to make Him known AND to deepen our own understanding of our Christian identity as the beloved sons and daughters of God as the Body of Christ. Like John the Baptist, we go from not knowing ... to seeing ... to testifying. More than likely, we aren't called to testify to the Son of God by going out and baptizing or doing great things. We testify to Jesus' identity and carry forth His saving mission by being faithful to the ordinary things in life ... by doing God's will (see the Responsorial Psalm). The revelation of Jesus' identity – how He is made known in the world – is mediated by the way we live our lives every day ... by what we say and what we do and how we act.

Thus, we too, must become more fully the "*Lamb of God*." This means that, like Jesus, we must be willing to die to ourselves for the sake of others. Like John the Baptist to whom "*Jesus came toward*," opportunities to-die-to-self come to us every day. Like John, we simply need to open our eyes to recognize and respond to opportunities to carry forth Jesus' ministry to others. Our own testimony to Jesus' Presence and our own understanding of who He is becomes known through the good we do for others.

May Saint Michael the Archangel defend, guide, protect, and intercede for us always!

Fr. Larry