



**The Second Sunday after the Epiphany**  
**January 19, 2020**  
*The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector*

+O God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Historically, the hymn, “The Lamb of God” has been part of the liturgy from about the sixth century when it was introduced in Syria. In John’s Gospel today, we heard the text of this hymn which today is either spoken or sung as the consecrated bread is broken in two. We refer to this prayer of the Eucharist as “The Fraction Anthem”. The bread is broken as a reminder that Jesus gave his life that we might have life.

At the 10:30 today, we will sing this biblical text not in Spanish. It is a tender setting and connects us with our Latina and Latino sisters and brothers. New to St. Mark’s, we hope it will be appreciated and meaningful. Beware! It’s a tune that may get stuck in your brain, as it does in mine.

John the Baptist tells us that Jesus is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” We could spend time discussing the historical context of a lamb in the Hebrew Tradition. We could discuss the Book of Exodus and the Passover in which the blood of a sacrificed lamb was spread on the lintels of the doors of the Hebrew people in Egypt. That blood saved their first male child from death, thus initiating The Passover of the Lord. (Exodus 12: 21-28)

A resource I read in preparation for today’s message said that the image of the Lamb of God “evokes victory. The Book of Revelation highlights that notion picturing the Lamb surrounded by angels, the ‘living creatures,’ and elders, who cried out, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and praise!’ (Revelation 5:12). Revelation also tells us that “Jesus... will be victorious against the powers of evil and will invite the righteous to the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9)... The hymn, ‘The Lamb of God’, invokes Christ and recalls His sacrificial death with overtones of a hymn of victory of the triumphal Lamb.” (<http://catholicstraightanswers.com/why-is-jesus-called-the-lamb-of-god/>) Powerful stuff, right!

After John the Baptist’s testimony about the baptism of Jesus, he said to two of his disciples, “Look, here is the Lamb of God”. After hearing that, John’s disciples left him and followed Jesus. Perhaps, one of the more powerful aspects of the passage is “Come and see”, words spoken by Jesus.

I believe we are here today because we have “come” in order to “see” how best to follow Jesus. Thank you for being here today when you could easily have stayed at home.

Jesus calls us, invites us, and assures us that in relationship with him, we can experience the love of God as it unfolds in our hearts. It is the Church’s hope that that love of God in Jesus is taken into the world so much in need. Once we have come, seen and embraced the love of God in Jesus, what are we to do as his disciples?

I believe that we called to follow and be transformed in to people who embody Jesus and his Way of Love and become a prophetic voice. Recall if you will, Isaiah says a voice “crying in the wilderness” to prepare the “Way of the Lord”. (Isaiah 40:3) Isaiah wore that mantle. Paul and Peter wore that mantle. Our brother, Martin Luther King, Jr., wore that mantle. Like them and many others, we are called to wear that mantle as servants of the Gospel of Jesus.

Martin's life didn't end when he was shot and killed in 1968. Martin's life lives on, not just in history books and articles, but in the hearts and minds of all who work for justice, an end to racism, bigotry and violence and who strive to be peacemakers as best we can. Those are not 'abstract' traits of what it means to follow Jesus. They are concrete examples of what it means to be *like* Jesus.

Martin worked to be like Jesus, a voice crying out in midst of racial injustice. So, too, are we called to be like Jesus and be people of justice, truth and love.

Martin was not perfect just as we are not perfect. Martin struggled with his own humanity, just as I struggle with mine. Perhaps, you do as well.

Martin's passionate prophetic voice burst forth from deep within him. It was and is a voice of change, transformation and freedom for the oppressed. I can only imagine what Martin would say about those held behind walls of chains at the borders of our nation.

We would be remiss to not acknowledge that many of the victories of the Civil Rights Movement seem to be slipping away. There are more and more hate crimes, more and more people of color imprisoned, and too many of our brothers of color shot and killed in city streets or even in the privacy of their own home.

As we find ourselves in political and social divisions, racial equity and justice could be sources of unity. But first, we need to admit that racism is a sin and commit to end it in our hearts and in our community.

Some of us will make time over the next two days to recall, to remember and to celebrate the legacy of Dr. King. Tomorrow, our nation will pause to honor him. There are handouts at both entrances with numerous opportunities to participate in the celebration in Grand Rapids. If you can be here tomorrow evening, those of us gathered at 5:30 will walk together to Fountain Street Church for the City's closing celebration of the day.

Perhaps today, we can recall, remember and celebrate John the Baptist, the disciples of Jesus, Jesus himself and our brother, Martin. Let us recognize the darkness of racism which continues in our world.

During this Season of Epiphany, we are called to "Shine our Light" for all those who sit in darkness. The darkness of racism impacts us all. Let us ask God for our own healing and the healing of our nation and pray that racism will be dismantled.

The Creed we profess reminds us that we "believe in the Resurrection from the dead", the ultimate victory over darkness. We believe that one day the light of Jesus will reign in every heart, a strong hope for which we long and for which we give God thanks. Amen.