

O. T. II Sunday (Jan 16/11) homily on JN 1: 29-34

A young man just out of college, Steve was searching for God. He didn't belong to any church, but he had an open mind. On Christmas Eve, he decided to go to a Catholic Mass. He didn't understand most of what was going on, but when the priest held up the host and said: "This is Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," a light went on for him. He knew, without knowing how, that this was Jesus on the altar!

John the Baptist, the first to utter these words, had similar experience. He had been preparing for the Messiah's coming all his life, but he had no idea what the Messiah would look like. So how did he figure out that it was none other than his kinsman, the carpenter's son? As he tells his listeners, it was the Holy Spirit (John. 1:33). Can you imagine what kind of emotions John felt at that moment? "Excited" couldn't begin to describe it!

John the Baptist gave testimony to Jesus by pointing out that he was the *Lamb of God* (vv. 29, 36); *a man who was before me* (vs. 30); *the one on whom the Holy Spirit remained* (v. 33); and *the Son of God* (vs. 34). John's disciples called Jesus Rabbi (vs. 38). Andrew called him the Messiah (vs. 41) and Nathaniel called Jesus *Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel* (v. 49). Jesus completed the Christology with his own naming of Himself as the *Son of Man* (v. 51).

As a preparation for Mass today, try dwelling on these words of John the Baptist. How amazing it is that at every Eucharist, we are visited by the Lamb of God! The mere fact of his presence in the bread and wine is stupendous. It's a mystery we can't possibly explain, except to say that his love is so powerful that it transcends space, time, and ever matter.

But perhaps even more amazing is the fact that, like John, we can recognize Jesus. Our natural senses won't reveal him, but the Holy Spirit will. So as we receive communion, thank Jesus for this gift of faith. It's the best gift anyone can receive, for it's the key to all the other gifts God has for us. With his love and strength to sustain us, we have nothing to fear – and everything to hope for.

"Thank you, Lord, that I can know your presence in the Eucharist! May this knowledge fill me with zeal to love and serve you always."

Adapted from "Scriptural Homilies."