

2nd Sunday Ordinary time Year A

“Look, there is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

Very shortly, Fr Andrew, during the Communion Rite, will repeat these words of John the Baptist as he holds up Jesus, really present in the Host and chalice. It is the same Jesus John pointed to 2000 years ago.

We are called.

Our response should be the same as the Psalmist today - “Here I am Lord, I come to do your will.”

We hear John the Baptist say today “Yes, I have seen and I am witness that he is the Chosen one of God.

We are called to be witnesses. We are called to be Saints as St Paul says in our second reading. And we are also called to be the light of the nations – called to be the light so that Gods salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

How can we be lights? How can we be witnesses? How can we do the Lords will?

All this week, as I have reflected on our readings today, I’ve also been re-reading one of my favourite books - “Mother Teresa of Calcutta: A personal portrait.” it is written by Monsignor Leo Maasburg, an Austrian priest. He was a close friend of Mother Teresa for many years and was her spiritual advisor, translator and confessor. He traveled with her in India, Rome, Moscow, Cuba and America. It really is a wonderful book which I highly recommend.

Re-reading it has helped me reflect on how we might be witnesses; how we might be the light.

In the book Monsignor Leo recounts how Mother Teresa would ask for three guarantees' (and ask for them in writing) from any Bishops who invited her sisters into their diocese. The first guarantee was the right to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their chapel and expose it for adoration. The second guarantee was that a priest be appointed to celebrate Holy Mass each day. And the third guarantee was permission to beg for alms in those bishops' diocese.

So, Mother Teresa and her sisters knew that they would start each day with Adoration and Holy Mass.

Monsignor Leo went on to write that after receiving Holy Communion and the Mass is over, the sisters in all the houses always say a series of prayers that Mother Teresa not only selected, but also usually led, reciting in a loud clear voice. One of these prayers is by Cardinal St John Henry Newman;

“Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being, so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of yours. Shine through us, and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see no longer us but only Jesus! Stay with us, and then we shall begin to shine as you shine; so to shine as to be a light to others; the light, O Jesus, will be all from you, none of it will be ours; It will be you, shining on others through us. Let us thus praise you in the way you love best by shining on those around us. Let us proclaim you without preaching, not by words but by our example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you. Amen.”

This idea was central for Mother Teresa; that Jesus radiates from us, shines forth through us, without words. Monsignor Leo goes on to write -

"I remember an incident in one of the sisters houses in Rome. A drunken beggar tottered to the convent door and, so as to stand up halfway straight, leaned for a long time on the doorbell. When a sister hurried to answer he snapped furiously at her, "Sister, I'm hungry! When are you going to give me something to eat? I've been waiting here forever. What do you do all day that I have to wait here so long? Get going and bring me something!"

The mealtime was long since over, but the sister turned around and went to the kitchen to prepare something for him. While she was making his lunch an idea occurred to her: She put a bar of chocolate into his lunch bag and brought the bag to him. He took it, murmured something like "that sure took a long time!" and staggered toward a nearby tree.

Then he opened the bag and looked at it for a long time. Right on top was the chocolate. Suddenly he was quite sober; he stood up and went back to the sister's house, this time tottering less. He gave a short ring on the bell. Another sister opened the door. The beggar, who moments ago had been so rude, asked politely whether he might talk for a moment with the sister who had prepared the lunch bag for him. Someone fetched her and when she appeared at the door, the beggar looked at her with his tired eyes and said, "Sister, now tell me something about your Jesus."

What did the chocolate bar suddenly show him? Perhaps a spark of that divine mercy which, once we allow it to become part of our daily lives, living in our hearts and driving our actions, can show Jesus to others because it is no less than he himself, the Divine Mercy, living in us. Mother Teresa used to say, "God's mercy is nothing other than Jesus, who lives in us. Holiness is nothing other than this same Jesus, who lives in you."

Monsignor Leo finished by saying, "Through Mother Teresa everyone could meet Jesus."

The same needs to be true of us.

At the end of Mass, we are dismissed with the words "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."

That is our mission – let us pray that we take it seriously and truly live it out.