

“Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, in the 2nd Book of Samuel, Nathan tells King David this story:

“Two men were citizens of the same town. The one man was rich and powerful. The other was poor and helpless. The rich man had great flocks of sheep. He had so many sheep that he lost count of them. The poor man, on the other hand, had only one, tiny sheep.

But the poor man’s children loved the lamb. They played with it all day long. They even brought it to table to share the little food they had. Nathan says they even taught the lamb to drink from a cup. The lamb was like a member of the family.

Well, one day an important visitor came to the rich man’s house. But the rich man didn’t want to kill any of his own lambs to feed his guest. So, he had his servants go over to the poor man’s house, take the poor man’s lamb, and slaughter it to feed his guest.” ^{2Sam.12:1-4}

I share this moving, yet, very sad story of the rich man’s cruelty and callousness because it was one of the images that John the Baptist had in mind when he pointed a long, boney finger at Jesus and said to his disciples:

“Behold, the Lamb of God!” ^{Jn. 1:29}

Nathan’s story of the poor man’s pet lamb certainly fit Jesus. Jesus, too, was deeply loved. Jesus, too, was to be cruelly slain by evil men.

BUT, there was yet another image in John’s mind when he pointed that boney finger at Jesus. It was the image of the lambs that were sacrificed, daily, in the temple. Referring to these daily Temple offerings, God had said to Moses in the Book of Exodus:

“Every day, for all time to come, sacrifice on the altar 2 one-year-old lambs. Sacrifice one of the lambs in the morning and the other in the evening.” ^{Ex.29:38-39}

The daily sacrifices in the temple were made year after year, even in times of great famine when food was scarce and people were starving. In effect, John was saying to his disciples:

**“We offer lambs daily in the Temple for our sins,
BUT... the Lamb of God is the only one who can ...save us from those sins.”**

Long before John the Baptist or Christ himself, the prophets of old spoke of a **‘mysterious, servant of God,’** who would, someday, suffer and die like a lamb. Describing the death, Isaiah says:

**“He was treated harshly, but he endured it humbly.... Like a lamb about to be slaughtered... he never said a word. He was arrested, sentenced, and led off to die....
He was put to death for the sins of our people.”** ^{Is.53:7-8}

Here are the words of the ancient prophet, Jeremiah, spoken centuries **before** Jesus & Jn/Baptist.

“I was like a trusting lamb taken out to be killed and did not know that it was against me that they were planning ...evil things.” ^{Jer.11:19}

And so, the title, **“Lamb of God,”** conjures up two, vivid images:

1st, the image of deep affection and love, as we saw in Nathan’s story of the rich man/poor man.
2nd, the image of the suffering servant, as we saw in the sacrificial lambs, daily, in the Temple.

Now, there is one final image that **“Lamb of God”** conjures up.

What, exactly, **is** that final image that **“Lamb of God”** conjures up, **you ask?**

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

In chapter 5 of the Book of Revelation, the author keeps the notion of **love & affection** and of **suffering & sacrifice**, **BUT** adds the **further** notion of **‘glory & triumph.’** In **this** chapter, the author describes his vision of a lamb on a throne. The lamb is surrounded by people, who are singing and praising the lamb with this song:

“You were killed and, by your sacrificial death, you bought for God people from every tribe, language, nation, and race. You made them a kingdom of priests to serve our God.” Rev.5:9-10

Then the people around the throne are joined by the angels. The author continues:

“Again I looked, and I heard angels, thousands and millions of them!

They stood around the throne ...and sang in a loud voice:

‘The Lamb, who was killed, is worthy to receive ...honor, glory, and praise!’

To him ...be praise & honor, glory & might, forever and ever!’

And all the people around the throne shout, ‘Amen!’ ” Rev. 5:11-13

So, in brief, the title, **“Lamb of God,”** conjures up three vivid images:

1st, One of affection & love **for** the lamb,

2nd, One of suffering & sacrifice **by** the lamb, and, ultimately,

3rd, One of glory & praise **to** the lamb.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, of the many titles of Jesus—Light of the world, Good Shepherd, Bread of Life, Prince of Peace, Emmanuel—the title **“Lamb of God”** is the one we use each time we celebrate Mass.

Just before Communion, we join the choir, if it’s a sung Mass, in singing the **“Lamb of God.”** If it’s not a sung Mass, we join the priest in reciting the **“Lamb of God.”** Regardless, that very special moment at Mass—is a preview of the moment at the end of all time, when people of all nations will join all the angels of heaven to sing this song to Jesus, the eternal **“Lamb of God:”**

“You were killed and, by your sacrificial death, you bought for God people from every tribe, language, nation, and race. You made them a kingdom of priests to serve our God.

The Lamb, who was killed,

Is worthy to receive...

Honor, glory, and praise!

To him...

Be praise and honor, glory and might,

Forever and ever! Amen.

May that tri-une God, our Abba, bless you...

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.