

First Reading: Isaiah 49:3.5-6.
Response: **"Here I am Lord! I come to do your will"** (Ps.39:8.9)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 39:2.4.7-10
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3
Gospel: John 1:29-34

KERYGMA: The apostolic proclamation began, not with the Christmas story but with Easter. Everything else explains how it came to be and who is the Risen Lord, the **Lamb of God**.

The Lamb of God, of whom Isaiah prophesied, takes on the role of God's servant, Israel. **"The Lord said to me, 'You are my servant (Israel) in whom I shall be glorified'"** (Is. 49:3).

The Lamb of God, Word become flesh, **"will bring back Jacob"** (Is.49:5) and he will be **the light of the nations so that salvation may reach to the ends of the earth"** (Is.49:6).

David captures the attitude of being God's servant: **"Here I am Lord! I come to do your will"** (Ps.39:8,9). What greater blessing is there than doing the will of God, a perfect life?

Such a one **"delights in the law of God and in the depths of his heart"** (Ps.39:8) and God finds great delight in him, God's beloved servant.

Paul sees himself as a servant of the Servant of God, Jesus Christ, that is what it means to be an apostle. **"I, Paul, appointed by God to be an apostle"** (1Cor.1:1).

Paul claims all in the call to holiness, **"to take their place among the saints"** (1 Cor.1:2), and experience through Christ **"the grace and peace of God our Father"** (1Cor.1:3).

The Baptist, in describing Jesus as **"the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world"** (Jn. 1:29), recognizes him as the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, the one who will save us.

Baptist sees Spirit **"coming down on him from heaven like a dove"** (Jn. 1:32), a sign of who is Jesus, Son of God. **"Yes, I have seen and witness he is the Chosen One of God"** (Jn. 1:34).

SCRIPTURE: Ponder what the Baptist says in the **Gospel "Behold the lamb of God"** (Jn. 1:29).

LITURGY: In the celebration of the **Eucharist**, before Communion we sing **"Lamb of God."**

DOCTRINE: **Who is the Lamb of God?** Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and Risen Lord.

WITNESS: The Eucharist does not end with Communion but with mission. The Mass is pronounced in its conclusion, *'Ite missa est,'* (Go you are sent), not simply 'Go in peace' but rather sending forth (*mission*). You have a mission to carry out. You are God-sent.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Bible: Share with the children the Gospel of the day. Discuss what happened in the Jordan.

Worship: Discuss how often, in the Eucharist, the title of Jesus as the lamb of God is used.

Teaching: **Why does the Baptist call Jesus the lamb of God?** It is fulfilment of the Paschal lamb that was sacrificed and its blood saved the people from the angel of death (Exod. 12).

Witness: **Where do we see the Lamb today? How shall we live and bring others to him?**

FOR TEENAGERS (Shared Christian Praxis)

**What is your understanding and experience of the Lamb of God?
How would you explain your meeting the Lord in the Eucharist and being sent?**

Reflect on how the Paschal lamb as a ritual meal is fulfilled in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

My mission is His, to save the world. "**Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel**" (1 Cor.9:16).

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CCC)

After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover. Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (CCC 608).

LIFE EXPERIENCE: Divine Comedy of Errors (Holy Spirit is in the Church)

It is becoming clear that the translations we see for ourselves are more problematic than we thought, as seen by some of the linguistic and liturgical experts in the Church. I studied the "Scathing report on missal translations sent to the bishops." How much consultation is there as a People of God with their rights and responsibilities? Is not Sacred Liturgy for all, and how it came to be? One of the marks of the early Church is that it is not elitist nor gnostic-oriented but Catholic, with openness and all deserving to know what is happening. God's gift of faith is in all believers, **sensus fidelium**. Secrecy and cover-ups, as sometimes seen in the **magisterium**, make it seem esoteric and counter-witness. Some even feel that the *magisterium qua curia*, is attempting to turn back the clock or re-interpret Vatican II, a council which endorsed the ancient teachings of the Church, *aggiornamento*, renewal in terms of getting back to the roots. It is when the bishops are fully transparent with the rest of the Church, especially in issues that touch it dearly, such as worship, the more healthy and wholesome will be the Church. The era of abuse of authority has to end. Cover-ups of clerical abuse burst the bubble. In dealing with some of the questionable decisions of the bishops, with regards to the new English translations in the liturgy, they give the impression that some of the Vatican II fathers and the ICEL that was established, were somewhat misguided. Under the pretext of reinterpreting our greatest Council, which was the full complement of pope, bishops and laity, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they seem to roll back the clock. Seemingly, the very document upon which they base their mandate for translations, '*Liturgiam Authenticam*' or '*Ratio Translationis*', exposes some of their incompetence. Local expertise, priests and laity, have tried to express heartfelt concern for the Church but without success. In the long run, it could be the bishops who end up with red faces in the divine comedy of errors.

Many still wonder at the undue haste with which the South African bishops imposed the new translations, much to the embarrassment of many local Catholic expertise. We are grateful to our Catholic press, such as the National Catholic Reporter in the USA which released much of the 'Scathing report', the Tablet in England printing comments from some prominent scholars, and our own local Catholic newspaper, the Southern Cross, which openly shares the news and views of hierarchy and laity in the Church.

I suppose, in the divine comedy of errors, some of the incompetence proves that the Church is not just human but divine. The Church continues, even when things seem to go wrong, Christ himself is there to cleanse the Temple.

LITTLE ANGELINA

Angelina was permitted to accompany her Pentecostal friends to one of their services. With her Catholic upbringing, she was quite amazed that there was no Eucharist not even a proclamation of the Lamb of God. She was more astounded when asked if she had found the Lord. It had never crossed her mind that he was lost. Her experience told her that Jesus considered her with a great love and always close to his friends, especially little children.



(Artist anonymous)

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The Paschal lamb is brought to fulfilment in Jesus Christ. *Figura transit in veritatem*, i.e. the fore-shadowing has given way to the truth itself; as seen in the sacrifice of the Mass. Lambs were used for sacrifice for sin in the Old Testament. The Paschal lamb is a ritual meal celebrating the 'Passover' – deliverance of God's people from slavery and death. John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as the lamb of God and his mission of deliverance. This is climaxed in his death and resurrection and we are joined with him in a special way in the Eucharistic feast where Jesus is celebrated as the Paschal lamb.

Watchword: "**Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world**" (Jn.1:29)

Hebrew: הנה שה האלהים הנשא חטאת העולם

Hineh **seh ha'Elohim** hanose' hata't ha'olam.

Greek: **Ιδε ο αμνος του θεου ο αιρων την αμαρτιαν του κοσμου.**

Ide **ho amnos tou theou** ho airon ten hamartian tou kosmou.

Latin: **Ecce agnus Dei, qui tollet peccatum mundi.**

Portuguese: **Eis o Cordeiro de Deus, que tira o pecado do mundo.**

Spanish: **He aqui el Cordero de Dios, que quita el pecado del mundo.**

French: **Voici l'Agneau de Dieu qui enleve le peche du monde.**

German: **Siehe, das ist Gottes Lamm, das der Welt Sünde trägt!**

Afrikaans: **Daar is die Lam van God wat die sonde van die wêreld wegneem.**

Zulu: **Nansi iMvana kaNkulunkulu, esusa izono zomhlaba.**

Xhosa: **Nalo ixhwane likaThixo lokungxengxezela isono sehlabathi.**

Sotho: **Bonang Konyana ya Modimo e tlosang sebe sa lefatshe!**

Irish: **Seo e Uan De a thogann peaca an domhain.**

CATECHETICS

Lesson 7: *The Apostolic Era*

Filled with the ***Spirit of Pentecost***, the apostles go out to proclaim the Good News of salvation to the world. The apostolic proclamation was the '***Kerygma***'. The Kerygma is centred on the resurrection of Christ. After this proclamation, the apostles gave further instruction, explaining who is the '***Risen Lord***'. This instruction, or second stage, was called '***Catechesis***'. This then is how the apostles taught: first the 'Kerygma' and then the 'Catechesis', i.e. there was first the preaching then the teaching.

WHAT they taught (Content)

The apostles' teaching (catechesis) consisted of two things, viz., ***Narrative*** and ***Sayings of Jesus***. It was this apostolic catechesis that later formed the core of the gospels. Notice that all the ***gospels*** end on the ***kerygmatic*** note of the ***resurrection*** and experiences of the Risen Lord, which in fact is the heart and purpose of the Gospel message. The four written Gospels then, are not just narratives about Jesus but meditations, theologies if you wish, on the risen Christ, written in the light of the resurrection. It is also important to bear in mind that the apostolic catechesis was not just Christ-centred but rather ***God-centred***, i.e. Christ being the great gift of the Father's love.

HOW they taught (Method)

An example of apostolic teaching is in *Acts 10:36-43*, where Peter uses the biblical narrative approach. This method has three basic points:

1. The ***historical narrative*** (Stories of Jesus), becoming a basis of the ***New Testament***.
2. ***Quotes*** of passages from the Scriptures (Bible texts) which is now seen as the ***Old Testament***.
3. ***Application to life*** (Christian action) as per apostolic ***Witness*** and personal commitment.

At that time there were no such things as catechisms (books). The apostles taught from the Scriptures and their own experiences. The early Church's catechesis was ***Biblical*** rather than theological or philosophical with abstract definitions.

WHOM they taught

The apostolic instruction was directed to adults. The education of the younger ones must have been the responsibility of their parents or elders.

N.B.: Note that the Scriptures (Bible) in ancient times were basically what we call today the ***Old Testament***, and what the Jews call the ***Tanakh*** (תנ"ך) an acronym, consisting of the letters ת (T) for ***Torah*** (Law), נ (N) for ***Neviim*** (Prophets), and כ (K) for ***Ketuvim*** (Writings).

It would be of great interest to examine how we teach today? How would one describe the present approach? In the course of these lectures, other approaches will be considered in terms of their relevance and histories. For example, are we aware of how the ***RCIA***⁽ⁱ⁾ came to be? Suffice it for the moment to regard the relevance of the 'apostolic method' and how our catechesis could have Bible stories and quotes and applying them to life.

⁽ⁱ⁾ ***RCIA*** is an abbreviation of the '***Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults***', to be examined later and why it is considered today as the most eminent form of catechesis in the Church.