



### John 1:29-34

**29** The next day, seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, ‘Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. **30** This is the one I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me. **31** I did not know him myself, and yet it was to reveal him to Israel that I came baptising with water.’ **32** John also declared, ‘I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him. **33** I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit.” **34** Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God.’

Other readings: Isaiah 49:3,5-6 Psalm 39 (40) 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Despite the fact that we have now re-entered the ‘ordinary time’ of the liturgical year, there is something of a reluctance to leave the Christmas season behind. The first reading, just like last Sunday, is taken from the ‘songs of the servant’ in the book of Isaiah. This time we hear that the servant is to bring light and salvation ‘to the ends of the earth’. There is a clear echo here of the feast of the Epiphany and the people of the earth seeking the light of God. Furthermore, the gospel reading today is taken from the first chapter of John. We shall have to wait until next week to begin listening to the account of Jesus’ ministry found in the Gospel of Matthew, the gospel laid down to be read this year.

The Gospel of John, known also as the ‘Fourth Gospel’, contains in its first chapter the magnificent ‘prologue’, read at Christmas, which begins with the mighty words ‘In the beginning was the Word.’ There follows a portrayal of John the Baptist, which differs in many ways from his presentation in other gospels. As shown in today’s gospel, for this evangelist John the Baptist is above all a witness. There is no detailed presentation of the baptism of Christ. Rather, the Baptist proclaims the abiding presence of the Spirit with Jesus. This evangelist is not interested in the self-abasement of Jesus in accepting baptism from John, but focuses on the witness to Jesus given by the Baptist.

In this gospel reading John points out Jesus with the words: ‘There is the Lamb of God!’ These words recall the Passover lamb, slaughtered at the exodus from Egypt and year by year in the Jewish Passover feast. As the blood of the lamb was a sign of salvation for the Jews in Egypt, so the blood of Christ brings God’s salvation and freedom to those who accept him.

*Do I accept Jesus as ‘the Chosen One of God’?*

*How does the Fourth Evangelist present John the Baptist?*

*We pray with the Church: ‘Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on us.’*

*We pray for a united witness from Christians to the truth which Christ brings.*