

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #64

READING I Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The **LORD** said to me: **You** are my servant,
Israel, through **whom** I show my glory.
 Now the **LORD** has spoken
 who **formed** me as his servant from the **womb**,
 that **Jacob** may be brought **back** to him
 and **Israel** gathered to him;
 and I am made **glorious** in the **sight** of the **LORD**,
 and my **God** is now my **strength**!
 It is **too little**, the **LORD** says, for **you** to be my servant,
 to raise up the **tribes** of **Jacob**,
 and **restore** the **survivors** of **Israel**;
 I will **make** you a **light** to the **nations**,
 that my **salvation** may **reach** to the **ends** of the **earth**.

Isaiah = ī-ZAY-uh

The tone of this reading is encouraging.
 Slight pause between "Lord" and "said."
 Emphasis on "you."

Slight pause between "Israel" and "gathered."

The reading concludes with God's promise
 to Isaiah, which is God's promise to his
 people.

READING I

This Sunday marks the end of the first week of the liturgical season called "Ordinary Time" and the beginning of its second week. Ordinary Time is the period of the church year that stands outside of the all-important Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter seasons. However, to call this period "ordinary" is not to say that it is unimportant. Its name shares a root with the Latin term *ordinalis*, meaning "numbered." Thus, the thirty-four weeks of Ordinary Time mark the movement of time as the salvation story unfolds through the year. Green is the liturgical color for this

season, which is appropriate because it represents a time of spiritual growth. The readings for this Second Sunday in Ordinary Time focus on the commissioning of God's servants to reveal God's plan of salvation for the world.

Today's first reading is taken from what is often called "the second servant song" of the Book of Isaiah. Altogether there are four. This servant song describes a commissioning of the servant as a prophet or spokesperson of God. Although the identity of the servant is sometimes unclear in the Book of Isaiah, here he is clearly identi-

fied with Israel. But which Israel? The setting for this commissioning is the period after the Babylonian Exile, when King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Judeans to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple. Although we cannot know for certain, it appears that this prophet is among a small group of Judeans who are persecuted because of their opposition to more powerful returnees who have a different view of life in Judea after the Exile. Thus, the prophet, who is personified Israel, is commissioned to effect a change of heart in the rest of Israel. God responds by saying that

For meditation and context:

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

The tone of this reading is introductory. It involves one long inclusive sentence followed by a much shorter blessing. Proclaim the first long part, up to "Grace to you . . .," in the spirit of an introduction and the second, shorter sentence in the spirit of a blessing.

this restored and true Israel will shine as a beacon, inviting everyone to share in its light.

READING II Our second reading is taken from the opening section of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. The mostly Gentile Christian church at Corinth was founded by Paul. Acts of the Apostles suggests that he spent a year and a half with this community before moving on to evangelize other locations in the Mediterranean (Acts 18:11), so he knew

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10 (8a, 9a)

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard
my cry.

And he put a new song into my mouth,
a hymn to our God.

Sacrifice or offering you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me,
to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you,
O LORD, know.

READING II 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Paul, called to be an **apostle of Christ Jesus** by the **will of God**,
and **Sosthenes** our **brother**,
to the **church of God** that is in **Corinth**,
to **you** who have been **sanctified in Christ Jesus**,
called to be holy,
with all those **everywhere** who call upon the **name** of our
Lord Jesus Christ, their **Lord** and **ours**.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

them well, and the content of this first letter reveals as much. The opening follows the pattern of a first-century letter opening: sender, recipient, greeting. Paul, the sender, describes himself as an "apostle," that is, "one who is sent" by God's will. He describes the community as set apart for God and called to be "holy" in the fellowship of Christ. But Paul also wants to remind them that they belong to a much larger community of faith who serve the one God and the Lord Jesus Christ. What a good reminder for us, as well.

GOSPEL

Today's Gospel reading is another version of the story of the baptism of Jesus that we heard last Sunday. This version from the Gospel of John is unique insofar as the author uses John the Baptist as the narrator of the baptism event, as he speaks to his own disciples, two of whom will soon shift their allegiance and become followers of Jesus. John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God and testifies that he is the Son of God.

This reading begins with a very familiar phrase from the Eucharistic prayer we hear at Mass. Proclaim it with the same reverence you would hear during Mass.

The Baptist's words connect the Mass with the visionary reality he peered into. Speak the words "I saw" clearly.

Slight pause between "remain" and "upon."

Slight pause between "water" and "told."

GOSPEL John 1:29–34

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

John the Baptist saw **Jesus** coming toward him and said,
**"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin
of the world.**

He is the **one of whom I said,**

'**A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.'**

I did not **know** him,

but the **reason** why I came **baptizing with water**
was that he might be made **known to Israel."**

John testified further, saying,

**"I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven
and remain upon him.**

I did not **know** him,

but the one who **sent me to baptize with water told me,
'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'**

Now I have **seen and testified** that he is the **Son of God."**

Biblical scholars offer several possible scenarios for understanding the title "Lamb of God." Perhaps it is an allusion to a powerful and victorious lamb like the one depicted in the Book of Revelation, who stands before God's throne (Revelation 5:6–14) and who presides over an army of God's holy ones (Revelation 14:1–5). More likely, it is a reference to the Passover lamb, whose blood was placed on the lintels and door posts of the Israelites' homes in Egypt so that the angel of death would pass over their homes in the last plague of the Exodus story. Equally possible, "Lamb of

God" might be an allusion to Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement, when animal sacrifices were offered at the Jerusalem temple for the sins of the people.

Notice that this Gospel account does not include the tradition about Jesus and John the Baptist being related to one another (see Luke 1:26–38). Instead, the Baptist recognizes Jesus as Lamb of God and Son of God only because it was revealed to him through the work he was commissioned to do. The baptism which John was sent to perform is not a baptism of repentance like what we see in Matthew

and Luke. Rather, its function was revelatory. John was called to reveal Jesus to all of Israel and to witness to the world that he is the Son of God. Finally, notice how the Baptizer knew Jesus' identity. It was because of the Spirit who descended on Jesus and remained on him. The verbs "to remain" and "to abide," in John's Gospel, are symbolic language used to describe discipleship and the special relationship of indwelling that Jesus enjoys with the Father. C.C.