

Today's Gospel *continues* from the *Baptism* of the Lord

Celebrated last *week*.

We *heard* the Father from the heavens proclaim:

“*This* is my beloved *Son*,

With whom I am well *pleased*.”

And *today*, we hear the testimony of John the *Baptist*:

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

The Lamb of God.

*John's* followers *immediately* would have been *astounded* by the term.

*In* it they see not only the long-awaited *Messiah* –

Come to restore *life* for His people.

But they'd *also* think of *sacrifice*.

At *every* Mass,

In the *Eucharist* –

The priest *repeats* John's prophetic words:

*Behold the Lamb of God*,

*Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world*.

And we all answer:

*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,*

*But only say the Word,*

*And my soul shall be healed.*

And that is the *beauty* of God's love –

That He should *suffer* for love of us –

Like any good *parent* suffers for love of their child –

Even when the child is acting *less-than-loveable!*

They *give* their hearts *for* the life of the child –

*Without* concern for *themselves*.

They *sacrifice*.

But that sacrifice has *meaning* –

In a *word*: *LOVE*.

I heard a *deacon* once joke about his *wife* –

She was in the next *room* –

And *called* him in.

*Jim!*

And he said,

At that *instant*,

I knew *something* had to die!

Either I was going in there to kill a mouse or a cockroach or something,

Or *I* was going to be killed because of something *I* did wrong, or *failed* to do!

But *our* death is the death of the spirit of *selfishness* –

From which our *true* life *rises* –

The life of the Holy Spirit *that* rested on the Lord Jesus –

The Lamb of God.

A spirit of *love* –

Ready to be poured out for us who were *bound* in the sadness of sin.

*Sin* is but a terrible *loneliness* –

*A separation* from that which is *life-giving* –

*Hiding* from the loving gaze of the Father –

And *fearing* sacrifice –

Choosing self-preservation –

But it's preserving the *shadow* of a life that will only pass *away*.

May we choose *love*.

May we *know* the Father's love through the gift of the *Son*.

And may we *choose* to love as the Son has loved *us* –

With *our* happiness in mind, over His *own*.

And yet, in *acting out of sacrificial love* –

He could not have *been* happier!

May we *enjoy* the *fulness* of life that comes from loving one another as Jesus loves us.