

Jesu Juva

“Not Life as We Know It, but Life as God Knows It”

Text: John 1:29

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! I cannot think of a better Word of God to hear today than this one. A word to give sinners like us hope. A word to point us in the right direction. A word to say: whatever you have done, whatever regrets you have, you have a God who loves you. That a word we need to hear, especially today, our annual Sanctity of Life Sunday. Because all of us mess up life. We do.

And so the sanctity of life is more than just a one-Sunday-a-year topic - it is the battleground, or the Ground Zero, in the battle between God and satan. Between the God who believes every life is worth saving, and the satan who believes every life is worth *consuming*. And so we hand out little magazines for you to read four times a year - and I hope you read them. We include life thoughts in the announcements on the back of your bulletin every week - I hope you read them, too. To instill in your mind a “life mentality” in the midst of a world, ruled by the prince of this world, that thinks quite differently.

That being said, if the sanctity of life is more than just a one-Sunday-a-year topic, let me also say that Sanctity of Life Sunday is not just a one topic Sunday - just about abortion. It is about that, for millions of babies continue to be cut down at the very beginning of their lives. And the problem is getting worse with the advent of pills that abort babies the morning *after* they have been conceived - just like taking a couple of aspirin to get rid of a headache! These medical abortions may soon out pace and out number surgical ones, if they don't already. And how dangerous are these? Certainly to the life of the baby, but also sometimes to the physical health of the mother, often to the emotional and mental health of the mother, but now also in a new way to the *spiritual* health of the mother - for these pills are being advertised as a way to “prevent pregnancy” (which in this case is just a new, nice sounding way to say abortion) but, they say: *without judgment*. Without judgment. Well, not exactly. For there is a judgment coming - for all people, for all of us who mess up life - whether we like it or want it or not.

There's no denying that's a big problem. But as I said, there's much more to be concerned about. Perhaps we could call it the “abortion mindset” - the continued, creeping mindset that is so infected us today that we have the ability to cut out of our lives those people we just don't want in it. Viewing life as disposable. Valuing life by how valuable it is *to me*. There's even a new phrase being used these days to reflect this cutting out of others from our lives: *You're dead to me*. That's more than just a new,

clever phrase, I think. In the context of this Sanctity of Life Sunday, that little phrase should send chills down your back. *What are we doing? What are we saying? Where are we going?*

Consider *all* the life issues that plague our world today. **Mercy killing** is being extended and thought of as a viable option for more and more people of more and more ages and stages of life. **Assisted suicide** is now thought of as just a variant of that - the only difference being who is administering the lethal medicine. **Genocide** and **ethnic hatred** continues to produce great atrocities, including **refugees** - and how are they treated, and for so long a period of time? There also continues to be the problems of **human trafficking**, **sexual slavery**, and more.

The bottom line is this: *how do we look at ourselves and how do we look at each other?* Is each and every person, no matter how small or how large, no matter how new or how old, no matter how frustrating or useful, no matter how frail or how strong, a life given by God and therefore precious to Him, or something else? And how we look at people is how we treat them.

In the Introit this morning we sang: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.* But in this regard, what we say, what we think, and often what we do, is not acceptable in His sight, is it?

So I cannot think of a better Word of God to hear today than the Holy Gospel we heard today. And specifically those words of John the Baptist who looked at Jesus and said: *Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

We've been thinking about how we look at other people, how we regard them. When John looked at Jesus, he saw more than just a man - he saw the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sin of the world.

That phrase was a significant one to the people then. Lambs in the Old Testament were sacrificed on a daily basis to deal with sin. They are the reason why the Tabernacle and the Temple were established by God. The lambs sacrificed there were substitutes, graciously allowed by God to die in the place of the sinners who deserved to die for their sins. The people would confess their sin, see the death of their substitute, and give thanks to God for His mercy, love, and forgiveness for them. His mercy, love, and forgiveness that was not just an idea or a mental or "spiritual" thing, but which they saw very definitively and concretely when that lamb gave its life and shed its blood for them. So *they* could live.

Lambs had special meaning. Now, to be sure, sometimes that meaning was forgotten. At times, the people would forget the meaning of what was happening there and simply see the Temple liturgy as a ritual, and what they did as just going through the motions. *But*

God didn't forget. He didn't forget that all those lambs being sacrificed in the Temple foreshadowed and pictured THE Lamb that was to come. THE Lamb who would not only take away the sin of this person or that person and a sacrifice that would have to be repeated time and time again - but THE Lamb who would take away the sin of the world. All the sin of all people, ever. And for that Lamb you needed not only an animal, and not only a man, but *God Himself*. Only God Himself could provide and be such a sacrifice to do such an enormous thing.

So as we have been celebrating these Christmas and Epiphany seasons: the Son of God came, was born as the man named Jesus, was the Immanuel: God with us, and now is revealed to us as ***the Lamb of God***. And who He is, is what He will do.

Because when *Jesus* looked at *you*, He saw more than a sinner - He saw a life worth saving. A life worth loving. A life worth serving. You may not think you are worth that much, or even worth anything, *but God disagrees*. And quite frankly, HIS opinions matters more than yours! So if you are worth something to Him, you are worth something. *And what are you worth to Him?* The life of His Son, who came to trade His life for yours. Who came to take the judgment for your sin and give you His forgiveness. Who came so that God would not say "*You're dead to me*" but that you would *be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 6:11).

What a world this would be if we could look at each other as God looks at us. If we could look at every person as a life worth the life of the Son of God. As a life worth laying down our lives for. The sanctity of life wouldn't be a problem then, would it?

Can we do that? What do you think? Can we do that in this sinful world and as we live in this sinful flesh?

Well yes, we can *begin* to. Not perfectly, to be sure. But baptized into Jesus and given His Spirit and given His Word and learning of Him and growing in Him, yes, we begin to be like Him. His Word and Spirit and forgiveness working in us and conforming us back into His image (Romans 8:29; 12:2). The image lost in sin, but now restored to us in Jesus. So yes we begin to see as Jesus sees, love as He loves, serve as He serves, and do as He does . . . though we still have our moments, don't we? Those moments we revert back to the old, back to the sinful, back to the selfish, back to the unacceptable in His sight. Those moments that arise more often than we'd care to admit, and last longer than they should. Those moments when we see ourselves and others as bothers, as inconveniences to be avoided, as less than worthy of our time and effort, as just getting in the way, as wishing to be cut out of our lives . . .

Repent of that. All of that. For thinking of yourself that way, for thinking of others that way, for living as if you had not been baptized into Jesus at all, and receive not only the forgiveness of your Saviour, your Lamb, but also the NEW LIFE of the Son that He has

given to you. The new life provided for you by the Lamb who took away your sin, who took away your old, who took away your death, and gave you something new, something better, something that will last beyond this world and life: *Himself*. And He continues to give you Himself. That the *new* life begun in baptism continue in His absolution, be fed by His Body and Blood, and bring you to *everlasting* life. And not just you, but all people. Whoever you are, whatever you have done, you are not too far gone, you are not too sinful, for the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So have you had an abortion? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Have you remained silent and not confessed the sanctity of life? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Do you have doubts and fears about decisions you have made and things you have done? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Do you think of yourself or others as worthless? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Have you failed to love, failed to serve, failed to forgive? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Have you made the lives of others less and bitter and hard by your words or deeds? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Have you not been dead to sin and alive in Christ? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Have you cut others out of your life, or wished they were? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Do you want to do better? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Do you want to know the love of God? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

See this bread, see this wine? ***Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

And on the last day, the Judgment Day, when you see the face of Jesus, you will ***Behold the Lamb of God who took away your sin***. Who gave you His life, for the sanctity of

your life. You will see the Lamb of God, whose love for you will never end.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.