

Sunday, January 20, 2012

The Lamb of God Who carries the sins of the world

Archangel Gabriel was the first in the New Testament to reveal the mission of the Lord Jesus, the incarnate God. He spoke to Joseph about St. Mary regarding her Divine conception and said: ***“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”*** (Matthew 1:21).

Afterwards a choir of angels appeared to the shepherds during the birth of the Lord Jesus and one of them said: ***“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”*** (Luke 2:11). It is very evident that the Lord Jesus came to save the world from sin...But how? How will He free mankind from sin? How will He wipe out the sin? How will He end its dominion?

Now let's look at the witness of saint John the Baptist who was sent by God as an angel to prepare the path before the Savior. When he saw Jesus, he came to Him saying: ***“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (John 1:29). Here, the matter becomes clear: The Lord Jesus came to save us from our sins by taking the burden of sin off our shoulders and carry it on our behalf. The innocent lamb, the infinite in His Divinity, carries the sins of the whole world. He offers Himself as a sacrifice to redeem the sinners so they become justified. That is to say, **He took the sins we have to give us the righteousness He has.**

Therefore, we should not wonder why God took flesh like ours and lived among the sinners although He is without sin. He came forward to John the Baptist to be baptized like the sinners because His goal is to represent the sinful mankind before God. While He was in this very humble action, the Father glorifies Him from heaven saying: ***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*** (Matthew 3:17). The Holy Spirit also appeared in bodily form like a dove and descended upon Him. Perhaps in doing so, God was revealing to us the path to Glory which is to be humble like Him and follow His footsteps. As He carried our sins and burdens, we too ought to do the same with our fellow humans fulfilling the biblical commandment: ***“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”*** (Galatians 6:2).

Whatever man failed to do, Jesus came to fulfill. Man sinned and didn't admit his sin and didn't stand before God as a sinner, rather he began to offer excuses for himself and put the blame on others (Genesis 3:12-13). Thus, Jesus came and took the place of the sinner before the John the Priest who marveled at this act. John the Baptist initially refused to baptize the Lord for baptism is only for the sinners! Nonetheless, the Lord, in His humility and divine provision that surpasses all understanding, insisted on fulfilling the righteousness that man failed to achieve. He fulfilled the virtue of humility and self denial, the virtue of carrying the yoke of others, the virtue of repentance and returning to God. He did so by coming to John the Baptist as the priest who represents God. The Lord explained this to John saying: ***“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”*** (Matthew 3:15).

This Divine lamb who is without sin comes forward today to submit to the priest, John the Baptist. Thus, He [Jesus] leads us in the path of attaining the righteousness of God. When we follow His example in true repentance and genuine confession of our sins before the priest, we obtain forgiveness, justification, and a new life.

When we confess our sins, God carries them on our behalf as David the prophet confessed saying: ***“I have sinned against the LORD.”*** So he immediately heard from Nathan the Prophet: ***“The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”*** (Samuel 12:13). This exactly what happens in the sacraments of Confession and Communion, the priest takes the sins that we confessed and puts them on the Divine sacrifice during the liturgy saying: ***“O God who accepted to Him, the confession of the thief on the honored cross, accept to You, the confession of Your people, forgive them their sins for the sake of Your Holy Name which is called upon us, Let it be according to Your mercy, O Lord, and not according to our sins.”*** And before we partake of Communion the priest cries out saying: ***“Given for the remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of Him.”***

God wants to justify us and grant us eternal life. Therefore, He completed the Law on our behalf in total humility. He drew to us the way to be justified from our sins through the Church holy sacraments. His Holy Spirit works in these sacraments to justify us, sanctify us, and prepare us to the fellowship of everlasting life with Him. Therefore, we praise him, glorify him, and exceedingly exalt Him because He has done us mercy according to His great mercy.

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