

Something I find fascinating are nicknames - Shoeless Joe Jackson - he had new cleats that made his feet hurt so he played an at bat and ran the bases without shoes on - I can't think of any off the top of my head, but even some of the nicknames that people have in small towns are great - sometimes they go so far back that no one really knows where the name came from - and sometimes people rememberer for sure why the person has that nickname

Names mean something - that is part of the fun and joy of reading the saints papers of the kids getting Confirmed - nothing against their birth name, but when they pick their saint name, they get to pick someone who they have a connection with - it is interesting to see who and which saint they pick

I wish you could have been with me last week at the Seek Conference in San Antonio - watching 13,000 college kids from all over the US worship Jesus for four days straight is absolutely amazing - I estimate that at least 6000 Confessions were heard - One night they had Eucharistic Adoration and Confessions in the main arena - watching 13,000 youth worshipping Jesus together can melt a priest's heart

Also last weekend, a couple of parishioners went to the Life Line event in the Cities put on by NET - one parishioner was blown away by the reverence thousands of high school youth had for the Eucharist and Mass

Yes, we need to accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, but we don't have to do this alone - Jesus came for all those who would believe in Him

St. Paul says we have been sanctified in Christ Jesus - he says we are called to be holy - that all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, are one Body

Jesus is God's universal call to the family of God

God started small - with the nation of Israel - as we heard in the first reading from Isaiah

Through the prophet Isaiah, God tells Israel, that through her, God will show His glory - however, this is not enough - God doesn't show Israel His glory for her own sake - this is too little - rather He shows His glory through Israel so that not only Israel comes back to Him, but that she becomes a glorious sight, a light to all the nations - why? - so that God's salvation may reach the ends of the earth

Now in Jesus Christ, the message of salvation through Jesus Christ has reached the ends of the earth

In today's Gospel, when Jesus approaches, notice John the Baptist doesn't say, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of Israel." - No, John the Baptist says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." - again in Jesus Christ, God calls all of humanity back to repentance and into the family of God

It is also significant that John calls Jesus the Lamb of God - what does this title, this name, mean, "Lamb of God"? - the blood of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12) delivered the Israelites in Egypt from slavery and death - the Lord Jesus freely offered up his life for us on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 Corinthians 5:7) - the blood which He poured out for us on the cross cleanses, heals, and frees us from our slavery to sin, and from the "wages of sin which is death" (Romans 6:23) and the "destruction of both body and soul in hell" (Matthew 10:28)

John, by calling Jesus the "Lamb of God," points to Jesus' saving mission - to offer up His life as the atoning sacrifice for our sins

So here, even before Jesus' public ministry, several years before Easter Sunday, John already prophetically proclaims Jesus' mission and death and resurrection on the Cross

It is significant that John was the son of Zachariah, a priest of Israel who participated in the daily sacrifice of a lamb in the temple for the sins of the people (Exodus 29) - John recognized that Jesus was the perfect unblemished lamb offered by the Father in heaven as the one and only sacrifice that could cancel the debt of sin and free us from death and the destruction of body and soul in hell if we so choose

Which is good - if we had to take the time to sacrifice a lamb every Sunday, Mass would be a whole lot longer and a whole lot messier - so even for this reason, it is good that Jesus came and offered Himself, the unblemished lamb, as a sacrifice for our sins and freed us from the death and destruction of our soul

The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, reveals who Jesus truly is; that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world

So Jesus is the Lamb of God - this is Jesus' nickname - Jesus' nickname signifies His mission - Jesus' mission is to set us free from our sins - He did this by dying on the Cross, rising from the dead, and sending us the Holy Spirit

However, again, we need to accept this saving gift from Jesus - do we allow God's saving gift, God's saving grace to work in our hearts? Do we strive to grow in holiness?

Do you want to grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ? Ask the Lord to pour his Holy Spirit upon you to deepen your faith, hope, and love for God and for the plan He has for your life

The response to the Responsorial Psalm this Sunday is, "Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will."

I think too often we approach God and say, "Here am I, Lord; I come to do my own will."

Jesus' nickname, "Lamb of God," indicated His mission - it indicated God the Father's will for Jesus, God the Son

What is God's plan, what is God's mission, for your life? - if you don't know, pray and ask God to reveal it to you

The Seek Conference that I went to in San Antonio is put on by FOCUS - I know I've mentioned this organization before - they send young missionaries to college campuses to witness the Gospel to college students - many holy marriages have come out of missionaries falling in love with each other - also many missionaries have gone on to vocations to the priesthood and religious life

These young people are asking not what they want from life, but what does God want for my life - what is God's will for my life - I was talking to a missionary and they said their parents wanted them to get a "real" job - but they felt called to be a FOCUS missionary and share the Gospel on college campuses - so that's what they did - these young people are saying, "Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will."

This should be true of us as well - not just in the big decisions in life, like who are you going to marry - what job or vocation am I going to do, but even in the small things - are we doing our own will or are we doing God's will?

If Jesus' nickname is "Lamb of God," then our nickname is "son of God," "daughter of God" - do we act like we are beloved, obedient sons and daughters of God? - "Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will."