

Homily 2nd Sunday of the Year A 2023

Once again, we are reminded of Jesus' baptism, and John the Baptist stands up as a primary witness to Jesus, calling him *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*.

Making atonement for sin is a strong theme throughout the whole of the history of the Chosen People beginning with the lamb that was sacrificed to save them from the angel of death and their escape from slavery in Egypt. Every year many lambs were sacrificed in the temple in atonement for sin. In a certain tradition, goats were used, one of which was laden with the sins of the people and sent out into the desert – *taking their sins away*. It was a theme applied to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and subsequently to the Messiah, to Jesus Christ.

In our baptism we share in the life, freedom and truth that Jesus one for us through his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection in which he conquers sin and death. Christ has set us free but, do we pause long enough to reflect on what this freedom means for us in reality?

Isaiah (61:1) makes clear that *"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners"*

Acknowledge the debilitating effects of sin on our lives. Sin enslaves, it takes away our hope, it stifles the good and love that we have within us, it depresses us and prevents us from doing the good things we want to do and urges us to do the things we do not want to do. In recognising this, we can see that, when Jesus walked among the people, those who listened to him with their hearts, found someone who accepted them as they were, imperfect people, but people valued and honourable, people capable of being good and loving, and doing great things. Reflecting on Jesus in scripture, it is possible to feel the great sense of relief among the people, a release from the burden they had been carrying for too long. This kind of freedom even helps us face impossible situations, those situations for which we see no possible solution and feel completely unable to offer any kind of response.

A man who took great pride in his lawn found himself with a large crop of dandelions. He tried every method he knew to destroy them. Still, they plagued him.

Finally, he wrote to the Department of Agriculture. He enumerated all the things he had tried and closed his letter with the question: "What shall I do now?"

In due course the reply came: "We suggest you learn to love them."

I was proud of my lawn but I too was plagued with dandelions that I kept fighting with every means in my power. So, learning to love them was no easy task.

I began by talking to them each day. Cordial. Friendly. They maintained a sullen silence. They were smarting from the war I had waged against them and they were suspicious of my motives.

But the day came when they smiled and relaxed. And we started to become friends. My lawn, of course, was ruined. But how attractive my garden became!

Someone has been adding soil to my garden. The plot thickens!!

I feel sorry for wheelbarrows. They're always being pushed around.

What's green and sings? Elvis Parsley.

What's a frog's favourite type of flower? Croakus!

What did the husband say when his wife told him he bought the wrong flowers? "Oopsie daisy!"