

**Homily - Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
San Fernando Cathedral – January 15, 2023**

John the Baptist said that he did not know the Lord, even though he had recognized him even from his mother's womb. This is a provocation for us to doubt our self-assurance about our knowledge of Jesus. Do we really know him? John himself, the day before, said: *"No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him."* (Jn 1:18).

In today's gospel, the Baptist is echoing the words of the Father, which were heard at Mass last Monday, on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord: *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* John is witnessing to the voice of the Holy Spirit within him. Both the inner voice and the voice from heaven confirm the truth: Jesus is the Christ.

The first reading, from Isaiah, is a poem where God addresses his "servant." The servant's mission was the reunification of Israel and Jacob, two names for the same people. However, He says, *"It is too little... for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."*

Jesus is always greater than we think. With his presentation of Jesus, right before he begins his public ministry, John the Baptist manifests and emphasizes the incomparable greatness of the Christ, the Son of God. There is no mission comparable to that of being "light to the nations." A people in crisis, invaded by the Romans, following a preacher in the desert, finds its ultimate calling at the

same location where their ancestors crossed the river Jordan to enter the promised land. Everyone finds their true identity when they get to know Jesus, rooted in their own memory. God speaks to us through every event in our lives. Nonetheless, not even John the Baptist is ever done getting to know the Savior. There are no limits to the new life in Christ.

Saint Paul points out that he was *“called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.”* Our calling comes from the Lord’s initiative. Jesus is the foundation of Paul’s ministry, as He is our own foundation. There is nothing good we can achieve without Jesus.

By calling Jesus “the Lamb of God,” John already points towards the Paschal Mystery. The paschal lamb was sacrificed at the temple to commemorate the people’s liberation from slavery in Egypt. A lamb defeating the powers of the world seems contradictory. The knowledge of God through Jesus also challenges us. Pope Francis says that Jesus is *“the true Paschal Lamb, who immerses himself in the river of our sin in order to purify us.”*

The baptism with water that John offers represents the right attitude to receive God’s saving mercy. However, *“it is too little.”* **We cannot save ourselves.** Jesus seems to come by surprise, when he wills. He brings a radically new kind of baptism. We need the right disposition. However, Jesus alone can immerse us in the Spirit of God. Our hope is rooted in the fact that we know by faith: the sin of the world is overcome by the power of the Spirit that Jesus brings. We must follow him all the way to the cross.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, help us get to know your Son.