

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church  
Epiphany II  
January 18, 2026  
rmcneely+  
Behold the Lamb of God  
Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.

I once attended a charity event in the community of Diablo.

It was a prestigious affair that raised a lot of money.  
It featured dinner and a guest speaker.

The CEO of the then massive  
Pacific Bell Company.

Cell phones were new and dawning and not everyone had  
one yet.

But the speaker noted that it had become fashionable to mute them  
At times such as this to avoid the interruption of them  
ringing.

But the CEO of the phone company said not to do that.

Let your phones ring

Use them.  
Make calls.  
Receive calls.

He got a good laugh from the audience who realized the calls  
Generated income for his company.

Have you ever asked yourself why Jesus  
Went to John to be baptized?

Jesus was free of sin

So the Jewish baptism ritual did not wash away His sins.

Jesus was of God

So could the baptism impart to Him the Holy Ghost  
As it does for us?

Why does scripture direct our attention to His Baptism  
And why does His earthly ministry begin there?

The story of His baptism is told in all four of the New Testament Gospels.

It is that important.  
And what a story it is.

It takes place in the wild  
In the vicinity where centuries before  
Elijah  
Had lived and preached.  
To the crowds that flocked from Jerusalem, Judea and Galilee  
To hear John.  
This strange, almost scary man  
Who ate locusts and wild honey  
Who wore animal skins  
Who railed at all who journeyed there.  
Who appeared for all the world to be Elijah  
Returned from God.  
Who fulfilled the very last prophecy of the Old Testament  
Who was the herald of the Messiah.

John even repeated the prophecies of Isaiah  
“I am the voice one crying in the wilderness.  
Prepare ye the way of the Lord  
Made straight in the desert,  
a highway for our God.”

And without warning, it happened.  
John spotted Jesus,  
Perhaps silhouetted against the sky  
As He walked toward the river.  
He pointed to Him  
And cried out “Behold. Behold the Lamb of God  
Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.”  
Jesus submitted Himself to John and  
As He arose from the murky waters of the Jordan,

There was this cosmic event:

The Heavens opened

“Tore apart” is the literal word of the Greek that Mark used.

And the Holy Ghost descended

As if it were a dove

Descended upon Jesus.

And the voice of God boomed over the landscape

“Thou art my beloved Son.

In whom I am well pleased”

As they say in Hollywood:

“Cue the orchestra, fade to black and roll the credits”.

What an epoch event.

One packed with meaning.

No wonder some of our cousin Christian denominations view this

As the event that marks the Epiphany,

the manifestation of Christ.

rather than the arrival of the Magi as we do.

John’s proclamation: “Behold the lamb of God

Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the World.”

Is the foundation of the second sacrament

That Jesus declared was necessary to attain Heaven

And eternal life.

Listen for it in a few minutes as it invites you to Communion.

John’s words take us back to the Exodus,

Thousands of years before

And links us there:

The Lamb.

Innocent, gentle and precious.

Had been killed and was the focus of the Pascal meal

On their last night in Egypt

Their last night in slavery.

The lamb was sacrificed.  
 Just as centuries later  
     Jesus would be the final sacrifice  
     For our sins.  
     Innocent, gentle and precious.  
 In the eternity of time, the two became one.

I suspect that there were no words to describe the celestial  
 Presence of the Holy Spirit.  
 So the authors did what they could and all of them  
     Told us the Heavens were ripped apart  
     And they could only describe it as a dove  
     Descending upon Jesus.

A dove.  
 A gentle, soft bird.  
 Is it pointing us to the great flood  
     And another dove?  
     The dove that Noah sent from the Ark,  
     After more than a year at sea;  
     To bring a sign of their salvation?  
 The dove returned with an olive branch  
     A symbol of land  
     Of survival.  
     Of hope.  
     Of salvation.

It all happened as Jesus arose from the murky waters of the Jordan.  
     At the place, where centuries before,  
     Joshua led the Jews across the Jordan River  
     Into the Promised Land.

The Jordan, the lifeline of the Sea of Galilee.

As Jesus arose from the waters  
     Was He pointing us ahead three years.  
     To the time of Resurrection

When He would rise from the dead?  
 The irrefutable sign of His divinity?  
 The sign that brought Hope  
     To His disciples  
     To the millions who would follow  
     To us, here in this little miracle church?

This is the season of Epiphany  
     A time to consider His Manifestation to the world.  
     The time to consider how He becomes part of us.

But isn't it also a time to consider  
     how we should manifest Him  
     To the world?

The Church answers with St Paul's Epistle to the Romans.  
 In fact, of the 3 Sundays in Epiphany this year  
     all of them are from that Epistle to the Romans.

Paul begins with a sobering thought;  
     Know it or not  
     Like it or not  
     We each are given gifts from God  
     All gifts are different  
     As each of us is different.  
     No one gift is better than another  
     And no gift makes one of us more favored than another.  
     Possession of a gift is not an index to quality of faith,  
     Rather it is a challenge of faithful use.

Paul notes, since we all have gifts  
     Differing according to the grace given us  
     We must exercise them to the mutual benefit  
     of the Body of Christ in which we live  
     in the church which God has given us.

He lists examples of the gifts of God

Prophesy, Teaching, ministry, giving, leadership, mercy  
 With each gift he qualifies how we are to use it  
     With simplicity, that is: all your heart  
     Diligence  
     Cheerfulness.

Paul then turns to a discussion of the Law of life in Christ

In a fashion reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount  
 That radical new way of life with Christ,

He says Christian love must be without dissimulation

Must be similar, without difference one person to another.  
 Without hypocrisy.

Abhor evil and cleave to that which is good.

Sounds trite and over used to our 21<sup>st</sup> century ears.  
 But is that because of the fundamental truth of those words?

He says Christian love is to prefer the needs of others before our own needs.

Each of us of the Body, in Brotherly love,  
 preferring one another over ourselves.

We become interdependent upon each other  
 With each of us counting the other  
     as better than ourselves.

Not slothful in business

Never lazy or idle in our life in Christ

We are to be fervent in spirit

Burning with the love of God  
 Aglow with the Holy Spirit alive in our works  
 As we do the will of God in our lives.

Rejoicing in Hope

The certain expectancy of life hereafter

Patient in tribulation

Knowing that everlasting life is before us.  
All the while persevering in prayer.

We must contribute to the necessities of the people of God

The saints of this world  
The people who have separated themselves  
And dedicated themselves to God  
Just as you have done this day.

The life Paul describes for us is not easy.

It is a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice.

On this day we consider both the dramatic first day of Jesus'

Earthly ministry  
And the manner in which we manifest Him to the world  
By the way we lead our lives.

That is our calling.

In this little miracle Church of God.

So answer the call.

It's for you.

