

Lamb of God

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

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In the Christian life, we often talk about what we can do to add to the church and world. This is a great way to share our gifts with others, build up the Kingdom, and live out our faith. As a parish, we too, ask you the same thing through involvement in our ministries and outreach. Making a positive contribution feels good, helps others, and gives us a strong presence in our community.

In today's Gospel, on seeing Jesus walk by John the Baptist said, 'behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.' This passage reminds us that for as much as Jesus came to give and to add, he also came to take away. As the book of Job in the Hebrew Scriptures accurately summarizes, 'the Lord gives and the Lord takes away.' While we tend to like the giving more than the taking away, both are important.

The life of a Christian, following the example of Jesus, the Lamb of God, is not just asking what can I add to the church and world, but also asking what can I help take away. This certainly includes our own personal sin, but is much wider than that. Three 'sins of the world' in particular that I think we can help take away are the following: our unrealistic expectations of each other, our

combative competitiveness with each other, and our social pressures on each other. All three of these add so much unnecessary weight to our world and overcrowd our lives.

- First, our unrealistic expectations of each other are the many ways we forget that we are human beings with limitations. When we expect perfection from ourselves and others, we are constantly disappointed and can become judgmental. As is often said, perfection is the enemy of the good. We need to help take away the perfectionism of the world.
- Second, our combative competitiveness with each other are the many ways we try to win so that others may lose. This can be seen in our efforts to accumulate more wealth and status than others in order to make us feel successful. When we are too competitive with each other, we lose sight of the common good and the poor get left behind. We need to help take away the competitiveness of the world.
- Third, our social pressures on each other are the many ways we assume that we know what normal is and treat anyone outside that profile as abnormal. As a result, we cut off creativity, diversity, and uniqueness or force people to be something they are not. This is not the way of finding our true selves. We need to help take away the social pressures of the world.

These are just three examples of the 'sins of the world,' but there are many more.

As Christians, we look not only to what we can add to the world, but also to what we can take away from the world.

In what ways do I assume adding is always better than taking away? What barriers, burdens, and obstacles can I help take away from our world so that others may have more space in which to enjoy life?

As we continue with this mass, let us pray for our heavy world. May we help set the conditions for human flourishing not only by what we can add to it, but also by what we can take away from it. Then, we too, will be like the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.