

**Behold the Lamb of God, eat my flesh, drink my blood: remain in him.**

*A reflection from Brian Wigger, Pastoral Associate*

Years ago, I had the opportunity to take a trip of a lifetime: I spent a week in Jordan.

Of all the remarkable places I visited and sites I saw, the most memorable to me was Bethany Beyond the Jordan, just north of the Dead Sea. This is the place where Jesus was baptized. It's now officially a World Heritage Site. The King of Jordan — a Muslim and a descendent of Mohammed — has worked to have the site protected for future generations.

Nearby is the cave of John the Baptist. You can also see the ruins of an ancient church, and what is left of a monastery, dating back to the 4th and 5th centuries. To stand there is to see the very beginnings of Christianity. It's overwhelming to contemplate.

Every one of us who is baptized can trace our lineage back to that shallow, muddy river, to the place when Jesus himself was baptized and began his public ministry. It is sacred ground.

Scriptures say this place John the Baptist saw Jesus and cried out, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

At every Mass celebrated we hear those words sometimes so often, in fact, that we could almost take it for granted. But this weekend perhaps we need to hear those words as if for the first time.

The astounding reality is: those words at that moment in the Mass proclaim a miracle, an extraordinary gift. And we are a part of it. This is the gift we have been given.

Consider what this means. Jesus is as present in this church as when he walked along the banks of the Jordan.

When the priest raises the host, our eyes behold the Son of God — hidden in something as humble as bread. Look up at that host and you see more than a sliver of bread. You are seeing the Second Person of the Trinity.

***He is truly here.***

Here is the infant born into a world that had no room for him. Here is the man who calmed the storm. Here is the teacher who fed thousands, the one who gave sight to the blind and who called the dead back to life. Here is the prophet who told us to love one another. Here is the suffering servant who prayed in his last moments, "Father forgive them."

And despite all that the world did to him, he gave us this enduring gift, his own body and blood,  
***“This is my body.”***

It’s time to be back where we belong and to remember why we are here. We are here because of what Christ himself told his apostles the night before he died: *“This is my body. Take it.”*

We are here because of what the priest acclaims as he raises the consecrated host:  
***“Behold the Lamb of God.”***

In a sense, during this moment the priest is effectively changed. He becomes John the Baptist — a prophet and a herald of hope. But, I think, we are changed, too.

We become more than neighbors from Columbia Tusculum area or St. Stephen Parish or the Riverview Catholics or even more than a part of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati,

We are those people on the banks of the Jordan, seeing our salvation and our hope. We are the multitude outside Jerusalem, hearing Christ calling us to be salt and light. We are the blind man, yearning to see. We are Lazarus, called from our tomb. We are the thousands who hunger on the hillside, desperate to be fed.

So we come forward at Communion to receive Jesus himself and when we are offered that host, the Body of Christ, we whisper “Amen,” — “Yes,” the most meaningful “Yes” of our faith.  
Yes, we say, I believe.

And we hold in our hands the savior of the world.  
The greatest love story of all time, there, in our hands.

See what draws us together. See the one who calls us to the Father to live as people of faith, hope and love. Here is the source and summit of our faith.

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