



4. January 2022

## Introduction to the Way of the Lamb

Jn 1:35-42

*The next day as John stood there again with two of his disciples, Jesus went past, and John looked towards him and said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God.' And the two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, 'What do you want?' They answered, 'Rabbi' - which means Teacher - 'where do you live?' He replied, 'Come and see'; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour. One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother and say to him, 'We have found the Messiah' - which means the Christ - and he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas' - which means Rock.*

If we want to take from the world of animals an example that can symbolise the Lord's attitude to his redemptive Passion, the lamb will certainly be the most appropriate, for it shows us something essential... We can hardly imagine a more innocent being than a little lamb that is silent before its shearers; an animal that radiates something so pure and so peaceful. It would seem that God - who has done all things well in His creation (Gen 1:31) - has preserved in a special way the original goodness that He placed in the lamb.

Many years ago, the founder of another community told me a story that, in my own words, goes something like this: When God created the lamb, he reflected on what he should provide for its self-defence. Then he asked the lamb, "Do you want me to give you claws like the cat has?" But the lamb replied, "No, because then I might hurt someone..." Again God asked him, "Or would you like me to give you teeth, like the dog has?" But the lamb replied, "Oh no, because I might end up biting someone..." Then God stroked the lamb, and covered it with his soft wool....

So far we have said enough about this tender little animal, which, when we look at it playing innocently, can lead us to a contemplation on a natural level and invites us to rejoice in the Lord's Creation.

We, as a Community, have adopted the name "Agnus Dei", which means "Lamb of God". This name is a constant invitation to follow the Lamb of God and to become like Him. Logically this does not count only for us, the members of the community; but all of us who follow the Lord should model ourselves after His image, and not move in the flock as if we were wolves, ready to devour the sheep; but rather as lambs in the midst of

wolves.

In one of his homilies, St. John Chrysostom comments on the Lord's words to his disciples: *"Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves"* (Mt 10:16). In this context, he puts the following words into Jesus' mouth:

*"When you go out into the world, show the gentleness of sheep, even though you are about to go to the wolves; indeed, not only to the wolves but in the midst of wolves. For I want to make clear proof of my power in that the wolves are overcome by sheep; in that, being in the midst of the wolves, and notwithstanding their endless biting, not only do they not destroy them, but it is they rather who convert the wolves. A more marvellous and greater feat than killing one's adversaries is to make them change their feelings, to transform their souls entirely".*

And St. John Chrysostom continues with this exhortation:

*"For while we are sheep, we overcome. Even if we are surrounded on all sides by wolves, we will prevail and be victorious. But if we become wolves, we are defeated, for at once the help of the shepherd will depart from us, for he feeds sheep and not wolves. He abandons you and turns away from you, because you do not allow Him to show His power. If, when harm is done to you, you show meekness, He is credited with all the triumph; but if you also strike out and throw punches, you cast a shadow over the victory." (Homily 33 on the Gospel of Matthew)*

On the way of following the Lamb, we are called to have precisely the attitude that St. John Chrysostom strongly suggests to us in these moving words. Such an attitude does not correspond to our natural impulse as human beings. Nor is it a false gentleness, which allows everything to fall on you because you feel helpless and at the mercy of events. Rather, in order to achieve the attitude of lambs, one of the wonderful fruits of the Holy Spirit must be put into practice: holy meekness (see: meditation on meekness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vivhAd7FgKk&list=PLQ38K-XkWVpIt5k7iPVbsSy7kyyKCch0p&index=3>).

If we focus on the holy meekness of Our Lord and learn it from Him, we will be fulfilling within ourselves what we heard in today's Gospel: *"Master, where do you live?"* And He answered: *"Come and see"*. Yes, in the knowledge and imitation of holy meekness, we will know the inner heart of our Redeemer. We will better understand His love, and we will correspond to our call to embrace this attitude in which He overcame the world (cf. Jn 16:33).

Holy meekness is also important for the Spiritual Battle we have to fight, because it will show us the right way to face the unavoidable confrontations. In this way we will not be tempted to fight like wolves, as St. John Chrysostom so wisely warns.