

■ The 121st Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

The prophecy of “comfort and restoration” for the people of Israel contains four “Servant Songs,” and this passage belongs to the “Second Song.” Here, both the people of Israel as a whole and the one Messiah, the “Servant,” are spoken of. Israel, chosen to manifest God’s glory to the world (Exodus 19:5?6), receives the vocation of being “God’s servant” and is called “my servant Israel.” God works to restore Israel, and the word He seeks to reveal through the servant is “light.” Even if this servant is not valued by others, God trusts him, esteems him, and honors him as the one who carries out His own plan. The servant confesses that the power to fulfill the given mission is not his own ability, but “my strength” that comes from being united with God. Including spiritual restoration with God and the rebuilding of the community, it is said that he will “bring Jacob back” to the Lord. The scattered people are gathered again in order to make them once more “the people of God,” thus fulfilling God’s covenant. Because the servant exists according to God’s will and plan even before birth, it is said, “the one who formed me in my mother’s womb” (cf. Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139). God will raise up the twelve tribes of Jacob and restore the survivors of Israel, and not only restore Israel alone, but also shine God’s light upon the Gentiles who are in darkness, expanding salvation from Israel to the nations. Liberation from the Babylonian exile, from sin, and from death, as well as the restoration of the relationship with God, are what “salvation” means here.

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1?3

This letter was written by Paul while he was staying in Ephesus (around AD 54?55) and addressed to the church in Corinth (Acts 18). At the beginning of the letter, Paul speaks about “his apostleship,” “the nature of the Church,” and the fact that “believers have already been made holy.” It was “the will of God” that the risen Jesus specially chose Paul for the mission to the Gentiles. Sosthenes (Acts 18:17) was the leader of the synagogue in Corinth, later became a Christian, and became a co-worker of Paul. Corinth at that time was a commercial city with many cultures and religions. The church was divided, faith was still immature, and believers were strongly influenced by worldly values. The “Church of God” is the community that belongs to God, centered on Jesus, composed of holy people, and existing within real life. To acknowledge Jesus as one’s Lord, trust in Him, and seek salvation is expressed as “calling on the name of the Lord.” All believers who have been united with Jesus through baptism and now belong to God are called “holy ones,” and those who are called to become instruments through which God spreads the Gospel are “the called.” The “Lord” here is not a “teacher” or “leader,” but the sovereign ruler who has been raised and who reigns even now one under whose authority not only the Corinthians but Paul himself also stand. “Grace” is the one-sided salvation from God, the life given even to those who are unworthy. Through reconciliation with God, the relationship is restored, peace is granted, and from this arises “rest.”

● Gospel Reading: John 1:29?34

This passage takes place on the day after the Jewish leaders asked John the Baptist, “Who are you?” (John 1:19?28), and he clearly stated, “I am not the Messiah.” “The Lamb of God” refers to:
the Passover lamb (Exodus 12),
the offering of animals as sacrifices for atonement (Leviticus chapters 4?5), and
the Servant Song (Isaiah 53:7).

John testifies that Jesus is “the Lamb of God” because He is the one who bears and takes away the sin of humanity. Although John was born before Jesus, Scripture says that God “made the universe through the Son” (Hebrews 1:2). Therefore, Jesus existed before creation, and John testifies that He is “the one who was before me.” Not knowing that Jesus was the Messiah, John says, “I did not know him.” The role of John the Baptist was that of

the final prophet of the Old Testament: to prepare for the coming of the Messiah by calling people to repentance and administering baptism with water. The anointing of the Old Testament is, in the New Testament, shown as the one sent from heaven (the Father), Jesus who is baptized (the Son), and the descent of the Spirit like a dove (the Holy Spirit). Thus, the Triune God is at work, and the Holy Spirit directly anoints Jesus. John's baptism with water is a sign of repentance, while Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit grants new life and brings people into belonging to God. Having seen the descent of the Holy Spirit and heard God's word, John comes to know God's will and therefore testifies that Jesus is "the Son of God."

Author's Note "The Lamb" symbolizes the Messiah who is weak, nonviolent, bears sin, and offers His life.

"The Dove" symbolizes peace, spiritual purity, gentleness without strife, the beginning of creation, and the poor who offered doves as sacrifices representing the openness and universality of salvation.

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