



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

25 February 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Agnus Dei \äg-nüs-'dä\

Latin term for "Lamb of God." A title given to Jesus by John the Baptist (John 1:29); the litany sung or said by the assembly at Mass before Communion ("Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world . . .") introduced into the Roman Rite in the seventh century by Pope Sixtus; an image of a lamb often with a halo and a banner and cross used as a symbol of Christ; a wax disc sacramental.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-agnus-dei>

CONTEXT

Either sin is with you, lying on your shoulders, or it is lying on Christ, the **Lamb of God** [Agnus Dei]. Now if it is lying on your back, you are lost; but if it is resting on Christ, you are free, and you will be saved. Choose what you want.
—Martin Luther

The address to the **Lamb of God** does not refer to Christ simply, but rather to Christ present in the Eucharist as a sacrificial offering.
—Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J., The Mass of the Roman Rite

WHY IT MATTERS

The Passover lamb is the symbol of God's people passing over from slavery and death to freedom and life (Exodus 12). A "lamb led to slaughter" is Isaiah's prophesy of God's faithful servant (Isaiah 53:7). The victorious Lamb in Revelation is the light of God's holy city (Revelation 21:9-22:5). With all of salvation history as its backdrop, the **Agnus Dei** epitomizes the sacrifice of Jesus who achieves our freedom from sin and death. "It is love to the end," says the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction (616).

RELATED WORDS

Sacrifice | Paschal Lamb | Expiation | Fraction

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What is the meaning of the Transfiguration?

Gospel Greek deliberately avoids the term *metamorphosis* in this account, an attempt to sever any "pagan" comparison. The brilliance of Jesus' face; the enveloping cloud, and Peter's suggestion of pitching tents evokes significant encounters Moses had with the Holy Presence. The simultaneous appearance of Moses and Elijah, representatives of Law and Prophecy, reinforce these anchors to the Hebrew story.

So what's it doing in the New Testament? Scholars offer three possibilities. One is that this event is the Gospel of Mark's misplaced Resurrection story. The second idea is that this story is a theological reflection of the first-generation church: a symbolic way of reconstructing what Jesus means to them. The third theory is that the Transfiguration is a private vision of Peter in which the truth about Jesus "came together" for him and shaped his understanding of the Second Coming before or even well after Easter. What's our final takeaway? Saint Paul declares that we will all be transfigured if we keep our sights trained on Christ.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-transfiguration>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (FEBRUARY 25)

For the love of God

One of the deepest spiritual longings is to know ourselves as the beloved of God. Maya Angelou, in her memoir *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now*, recalls being asked by her teacher to read a section from a book that ended with the words, "God loves me." He instructed her to say the passage again and again. Eventually it dawned on her there might be truth in those words. "I suddenly began to cry at the grandness of it all," she writes. "I knew that if God loved me, then I could do wonderful things."

READINGS: Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Romans 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10 (26 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022524.cfm>). "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

FAITH IN ACTION

Make a Lenten practice of repeating "God loves me," and share the Good News of God's love with others.