

Lectionary Texts for January 19, 2020 • *Second Sunday after the Epiphany* - Year A  
Isaiah 49:1-7 • Psalm 40:1-11 • 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 • John 1:29-42

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**John 1:29-42**

*Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, c. 1425 – 1432

Oil on oak panel

Attributed to Hubert van Eyck, c. 1385-90 to 1426, and Jan van Eyck, c. 1390 to 1441

Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium

Considered a masterpiece of European art, one of the world's treasures, and one of the most influential artworks in history, the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, also known as the *Ghent Altarpiece*, is a large (11 ft. x 15 ft.) and complex 12-panel work. The lower central panel depicts the Adoration scene, with a bleeding lamb standing on an altar surrounded closely by 14 angels, with various groups of figures gathering and worshipping at a distance. The John text establishes the symbolism: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

About 1550 the altarpiece underwent an overpainting process, perhaps to adapt the painting "to the taste of the time," a scholar of Baroque art has said. In 2010 and again in 2013 the Getty Foundation provided grants to Belgium's Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage to provide conser-

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vation and restoration to the altarpiece. Recent announcements have disclosed that roughly 70 percent of the original panels were obscured by the 1550 overpainting and that several small buildings had been lost behind the addition of a blue hill in the adoration panel.

But the most astounding aspect of the restoration is the original face of the lamb. For the past 500 years it has appeared impassive and neutral. The recent work has revealed that the original face has penetrating, close-set eyes and full pink lips. It is eye-catching, almost anthropomorphic. The Lamb, once again, has an intense interaction with the viewer. (See page 4.)

— *Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan*

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### **Isaiah 49:1-7**

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!

The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.

And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God."

And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength — he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

### **Psalm 40**

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

Happy are those who make the Lord their trust, who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods.

You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you. Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted.

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

Then I said, "Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me.

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.

I have not hidden your saving help within my heart, I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Do not, O Lord, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.

### **1 Corinthians 1:1-9**

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind — just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **John 1:29-42**

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who

ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel."

And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?"

They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

He said to them, "Come and see."

They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed).

He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

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"The Lamb" from the Ghent Altarpiece, before restoration.



"The Lamb" from the Ghent Altarpiece, after restoration.