

# Second Sunday after Epiphany

## PASSING THE BATON

(Stick with John? Stick with Jesus? The Choice)

John 1:29-42

## Second Sunday after Epiphany Analysis by Marcus Felde

29The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' 31I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33I 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.' 34And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

35The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" 37The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38When 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?" 39He 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. 40One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon

Peter's brother. 41He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 42He 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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## **DIAGNOSIS: Baton, n., a policeman's billy, a truncheon**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) :** *Running from the Baton*

All those people going for baptism down at the Jordan went there because they were afraid on account of their sin, much as criminals being pursued by a policeman might fear the baton. "The Sin of the World" was the name of John's sermon (before he changed his tune to "The Lamb of God").

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) :** *Truncheon John*  
John confesses, under pressure, that he is only a propaedeutic prophet. He must know, as he watches his followers cross over to Jesus, that he is being replaced. He came for this. It would be wrong, in fact, for people to continue loyal to him and his message, no matter how it felt, when the real Maestro was coming to town.

**Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) :** *Down. Beat*  
Fine in Italian (which music scores use) means "the end." John the Baptist had led people to where they needed to go, in their apprehension about their sinfulness. They needed to see their hopelessness. And the end in view—absent Jesus' Lambness, that is—is not pretty. That's why John as much as admits that his washing does not give life.

**PROGNOSIS: Baton, n., a slender stick used by a conductor in directing an orchestra, choir, etc**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) :** *Take It Away, Hezzie*

John the Baptizer introduces the Lamb of God as the one who will “take it away”—it being “the sin of the world.” What a handsome promise! God will do it, by means of this Lamb, the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. But the way Jesus will “take it away” even John could not have imagined: Jesus shines in the limelight of the cross and resurrection, where his identity—as Lamb of God (sacrifice) and Son of God (royal heir)—are fully revealed.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) :** *Follow the Baton*

Jesus turned and asked the two following him: “What are you looking for?” Their evasion, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” probably should be read as “Do you know a place where we can hang our hearts?” Or maybe they’re looking for “a conductor”? That is how Jesus took it, apparently; he said “Come and see.” They remained with him, and remained with him, right through to the resurrection coda, keeping their eyes on his (conductor’s) baton.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *Con fuego! (with fire)*

When our eyes are on the conductor, we “rock”! That is to say, we shift from being Simons to being Peters. We are translated, transformed, transmuted, “transmused,” because our muse is no longer the Tragic but the Comic. We have “A Good Time,” which is not the worst translation of “eternal life,” which is what we have (per John the Evangelist) because we know Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah.