



The GOAT is a Lamb

A few weeks ago, someone approached me after Mass and suggested I give a homily about a goat. At first, I was baffled, but quickly realized the person wasn't speaking of an animal, but was referring to the recent acronym for "Greatest Of All Time." In this sense, a GOAT is someone who is a legend in their field, especially in sports. If we think of various GOATs from the world of athletics, we might think of the Babe Ruth and Baseball, Michael Jordan and Basketball, Serena Williams and Tennis, or Peyton Manning and Football. Certainly there are other greats from the world of music, and literature, and movies, and science, and practically every discipline we can imagine. But when it comes to the ultimate GOAT, the "goat" is actually a Lamb!

Today we conclude the Church Year with the celebration of Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe. Jesus came into our world to accomplish what no one else ever could or ever will again: Jesus won our salvation. He holds a status with which no one can compete, and no one will ever exceed. No one will ever be greater than Jesus. He showed His great power, not by flexing His muscles, but through what appeared to the world to be weakness. While Caesar was attempting to show his power to the world as emperor of Rome, Jesus came to save the world as a tiny, newborn infant. He began to usher in God's Kingdom, not with the sword, but by proclaiming the Gospel. Later, He allowed Himself to be arrested, and nailed to a cross, and left to die. But from what seemed a terrible defeat, Jesus arose victorious over sin and death, and gave eternal life to all who believe in Him. Who else but Jesus could accomplish such a feat?

Jesus is called the "Lamb of God," a reference to the lambs which were offered to God in sacrifice in the Old Testament, in particular, the "Paschal Lamb" which marks the Passover, and God's deliverance of His people Israel from slavery in Egypt. But none of those sacrificial lambs could wash away sin forever, and they certainly could not rise from the dead! But in the book of Revelation, we find a scene in Heaven, where the Angels and Saints and every creature on earth sing a song of praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing; to the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever." So, the GOAT is the Lamb!

Our second reading says that when Jesus comes again, every eye will see Him. Most GOATs like to be seen and celebrated for their greatness. While Jesus says of Himself, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty," He does not keep His glory to Himself. Jesus was already the King of the Universe from all eternity. So why then did He come into the world, suffer, die, and rise again? He did it to claim the Kingdom for us! Now, Jesus calls us to share in His glory forever! He invites us, not just to live in Heaven, but to share the throne with Him. And, His Kingdom does not pass away, and His record as the Greatest of All Time will stand forever and ever. Unlike the Kingdom of Pilate and Caesar, Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world, which is passing away. His Kingdom, which is now *our* Kingdom, never ends. When our second reading tells us, "Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth," it means we can believe His testimony, for His own rising from the dead is the assurance that we, who are one with Him in baptism, also possess eternal life. Our destiny is to be where Jesus is.

The University of Notre Dame has produced many "greats" throughout the years. From the Notre Dame football endzone a famous mural is visible. It portrays Jesus with arms lifted in blessing, and has affectionately become known as "Touchdown Jesus," as it appears Jesus is saying, like a referee, "It's good!" For our sake, Jesus has scored the winning run; He has carried us safely into the end zone of Heaven. At the final judgment, if we have lived in God's grace, Jesus will declare of our lives, "It's good!" But His raised arms are more than a declaration of the winning point scored. His open arms are the uprights, and the invitation to pass through His arms, safely into them, to be embraced by Him forever. Jesus has won the victory for us, and we may have confidence in our salvation through Him, for the GOAT is a Lamb!

Fr. Roberts