First Reading:  Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

- “The Lord said to me: You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory. . . . who formed me as his servant from the womb, . . . and I am made glorious in the sight of the Lord, and my God is now my strength! . . . I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

Responsorial Psalm:  Psalm 40 – Sung

Second Reading:  1 Corinthians 1:1-3

- “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, . . . to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere . . . Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

GOSPEL:  JOHN 1:29-34

- “John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.” John testified further . . . “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. . . . ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain he
is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”

**Steel Magnolias –**
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Shelby – Julia Roberts
M'Lynn – Sally Fields
Truvy – Dolly Parton
Ouiser – Shirley McClaine
Clairee – Olympia Dukakis
Annelle – Daryl Hannah
i. The scene we are given in the brief passage we hear in John’s Gospel this weekend is the evangelist’s version of the Baptism of the Lord . . . something celebrated earlier this week . . .

   In John’s version, he has John the Baptist . . . cousin of Jesus . . . saying boldly and without hesitation . . . “Behold . . . the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world . . . He is the one . . . I have seen and testified . . . He IS the Son of God!” . . .

   Imagine that scene . . . imagine John the Baptist saying these words . . . in the midst of continuing to baptize others . . . in the midst of doing what God had sent him to do . . . he stops . . . stops and calls attention to Jesus . . . “Look . . . look . . . there . . . the Lamb of God” . . .

   Now, perhaps we may find it difficult to see how anyone could get excited and stop what they were doing just to take in some lamb . . . or, in this case . . . some person who is not known by the crowd . . . not famous . . . not dressed in fine clothes . . . but . . . that did not deter John and the image . . . that image of the Lamb of God was astounding to those who heard his bold proclamation . . . after all . . . in the Jewish tradition . . . lambs were
sacrificed . . . their lives taken in the Jewish temple at Passover . . . a rightful sacrifice to God . . . and somehow . . . understood to be something of a “bridge” between the people on earth and the God they believed in in heaven . . .

But now . . . NOW . . . John the Baptist is telling folks . . . you have a NEW bridge . . . one with flesh and bone . . . and this new bridge is the ONLY bridge you will ever need . . .

II. Perhaps you and I cannot make the same connection our Jewish ancestors did and continue to make . . . but think about that BRIDGE . . . that, I would suggest, most all of us can relate to since often times we cross bridges to get from one location to the next . . . bridges, without which, traveling to different locations would be difficult . . .

But, Jesus . . . Jesus . . . the Lamb of God . . . provides us with the connection . . . Jesus joins us not only to God . . . but to one another . . . He did that from the moment he became flesh in Mary’s womb, and He has not stopped, nor will He ever . . .
Behold Him . . . behold Him in the Word you hear . . . in the very Body and Blood you receive . . . and be connected . . . connected to God in a way we cannot do on our own . . .