



AND beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? (Luke 24:27-32)

This ancient hymn was brought to the Church by Sergius in the seventh century, but its words and sentiments predate even that primitive time. All who are intimately aware of the Lord as their Shepherd, Rock, Shield, King, and Redeemer will also know, especially, that He is *the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*. Though it is not liturgically mandatory, it is allowed to be sung during Holy Communion by the rubric which permits the singing of a hymn. The hymn might justifiably be attributed to the authorship of John the Baptist for its central theme and spiritual statement, for he proclaimed, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*. (John 1:29)

The tune is the composition of Merbecke, and it reflects the reverence and awe represented in the foremost of our Church worship – the Sacrament of the Holy Communion.

Agnus Dei

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world
Have mercy upon us.*

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world
Have mercy upon us.*

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world
Grant us thy peace.*

Amen

O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world Have mercy upon us. The first clause in this verse is repeated three times for perhaps the best of reasons. Repetition aids recall (a cardinal law of learning), and the three repetitions remind us of the TRIUNE nature of our God. You will recall that shortly after John the Baptist made his proclamation, that the Triune God was strongly present at the baptism of Jesus. *16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the SPIRIT OF GOD descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17 And lo A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, saying, This is my BELOVED SON, in whom I am well pleased.* (Matt 3:16-17) God the Father's Word descended from Heaven, the Spirit of God descended and lit upon Jesus - who is God the Son. The same Three were present in Genesis 1:1 and every verse following.

The latter clause, ***Have mercy upon us,*** Is an oft repeated desire of the forlorn, the helpless, the sick and lame, the blind, and the abject sinner. You may wonder why the ten lepers that Jesus met in Samaria did not first plea for healing? They did not do so for they knew, innately, that the mercy of the Son of God would also heal every illness. Remember: *11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* (Luke 17:11-13)

O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world Grant us thy peace. When we have come into the saving fellowship of Christ, we have gained Mercy by means of His unmerited Grace. We did not deserve His Mercy, but we received it as a gift of Grace, and our sins were remitted. The Grace and Mercy of our Lord ALWAYS results in a peace that exceeds all of our worldly imagination. *6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (Phil 4:6-7) That peace of God will keep our hearts and minds focused on God's will and not preoccupied with that so-called free will of man which is enslaved to the Prince of the Air and of Darkness.

Summary Note

The Agnus Dei is a Holy and Reverent expression of our awe of the Lord of our Salvation. It is best expressed in an attitude of solemn worship and self-examination. Who are we that the Lord and King of Heaven should bear His breast and body to the sword - for us? The Lord's Supper is such an ideal setting for the singing of this ancient and powerful hymn of praise and adoration to our Lord. Please remember those two men on the Road to Emmaus: They were walking the road forlorn and distraught over One whom they believed had been taken away from them forever - the Lord Jesus Christ. As they walked and shared their doubts and grieving, One walked right beside them for whom they were grieving. How often do we mistake our moments of sorrow and self-pity as a sign that God has abandoned us; and how often is He walking the road of our troubles right beside!

The Presence of the Body of Christ is symbolized by the Bread of the Communion, for He is the Bread of Heaven. It is a COMMUNION with the Lord and with fellow believers at His Table - the Lord's Table. That Bread is made by many thousands of grains of wheat that have been crushed to make something wholesome and full of life. (ABP Cranmer) The Christian, too, must bear his cross. He is often crushed in order to leave a sweet smelling fragrance and legacy of faith and courage.

The Wine represents the Life-Giving Blood of our Lord. It is full of the Spiritual nourishment that gives joy and warmth. The grapes, too, are crushed and fermented to preserve their essence. The Church must be fermented likewise with the gracious

fermentation of the Holy Ghost. The real and spiritual Presence of Christ in the Bread and Wine of the Lord's Supper is not subject to doubt or question.

When the two men fellowshiped with the Lord along the way, they had no real idea who He was, though they felt a certain spiritual presence that may have seemed odd to them. But when the Lord broke the Bread and gave to them, their eyes were OPENED! We may have a strong spiritual experience, but it cannot be filling unless we feed upon the BREAD! So may our eyes be open to the fullness of the *Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world* at the taking of the elements of the Communion at the Table of the Lord! Do not our own hearts burn within us as we fellowship along the way?