

Second Sunday of Lent A/2008

The adventure of faith is demanding, and at times requires sacrifices. However, these are not useless sacrifices; there is always a promise of blessing that follows any renouncement accepted for God's sake. That is what today's readings bring to our awareness on this second Sunday of Lent.

The first reading tells us the story of the call of Abraham, how God asked him to leave his country and his clan, and to migrate to an unknown land he was about to indicate to him. In fact, what is asked of Abraham is a complete detachment and a renouncement of any human security. But all that has a reward, because not only will God bless Abraham, he will also make of him a great nation. He will make his name great so that all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him.

However, the grandeur of the blessing does not diminish in any sense the suffering that comes from detachment and renouncement. After all, in order to come to glory, one might but pass through suffering. Suffering here does not mean necessarily physical suffering, but also sacrifice that one imposes oneself in order to succeed and attain any given goal.

It is in that sense we have to understand what Saint Paul says in the second reading when he recommends the disciples to bear their share of hardship in the spreading of the Gospel, not to get discouraged because of difficulties they encounter along their path, and to fulfill with joy their mission.

Jesus himself has gone through suffering and death in order to save us. The announcement of Jesus' passion and death, however, was very difficult to accept by his disciples. The idea the disciples had about the Messiah was that he could not suffer or die. It is at that moment, after having announced his passion, that Jesus who was used to going up the mountain to pray alone, takes this time with him three of his disciples, Peter, James and John.

But, why did he do so? In fact, he wanted them to see the glory that is his and to which they will have access, and share with him, if they remain faithful until the end. Even though they, too, have to go through suffering and persecution, they are called to an immense glory with him in heaven. In that perspective, the three disciples are chosen to be the witnesses of Jesus' glory. They are the representatives of the group of disciples and of the whole Church.

In the transfiguration, Jesus wants to teach two important things to his disciples. First of all, he warns them about the scandal of the cross by revealing to them the grandeur of his hidden glory as the Son of God. In other words, even if he has to go through passion and death, that is not the whole outcome of his life. On the contrary, he is destined to a heavenly glory, but it is a glory that comes after the passion and death. Second, Jesus wants to reassure the whole Church about our hope in the resurrection of eternal glory. Like the three disciples, at the end of our life, we will be transformed and share in the glory of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

In order to have access to that glory, only one thing is needed, that is, being able to listen to the Beloved Son with whom the Father is pleased. But the question is:

How often do we listen to him? Perhaps, we hear a lot of him, but do we listen a little bit more than just to hear? Who can listen well to someone in their own agitations and noise?

Lent is a time of making silence, in prayer, in order to listen to the Lord who speaks to us. For that, we need to get out of our continual agitations, to create an atmosphere of peace around us and in us that favors the listening to the Lord. It is not a question of fleeing the world, but of drawing energy from silence and prayer in order to go down from the mountain and to give witness about Jesus.

In the scene of the transfiguration, Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah. This conversation with these important figures of Israel history aims to show us that in Jesus are united the Law and the Prophets. For that, we have to trust him and accept everything he tells us. He is in the true line with the Law and the prophets, that is, he is the fulfillment of everything they stand for.

Let me now finish by bringing some points of meditation we draw from today's readings. The first point is about the call of God. Like Abraham, God calls each of us to follow him and to come to a new existence. It follows, then, that Christian vocation is not reserved only to priesthood or religious life. Each, according to his charisma and state of life, is called to serve God. That call, however, requires courage, detachment and sacrifice. To be unable to accept sacrifice in one's vocation is to put it at risk of failure. This goes for religious life as well as for the life of marriage.

The second point is the social character of faith. We saw that through the faith of Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed. That shows clearly that anytime there is a call of one person, God wants to reach to the life of many. The individual call transcends the limits of the individual and points to the multitude. This sheds light on our own personal vocation. We are never called for ourselves, for our personal good and only for our personal sanctification, but always beyond our own call and sanctification with a purpose of doing something for God's people. We are the representative of one another before God.

The last point is related to the transfiguration. In fact, the transfiguration of Jesus is a strong reminder to each one of us that, whatever might be the suffering we endure for the sake of our faith, they will have a price, that is, the eternal glory. Therefore, if we want to rise one day with Christ, we have to follow him along the way of the cross. Let us pray God in this Lenten season that he gives us the grace of faithfulness so that in our suffering we are not discouraged, but look at Christ who went the same way before he triumphed in the resurrection. May God bless each one of you!

Genesis 12, 1-4a; 2 Timothy 1, 8b-10; Matthew 17, 1-9



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