

## Second Sunday of Lent C/2010

We are used to praying and presenting to God our supplications. Whatever might be the content of our prayer, its forms and its variety, one thing is sure: prayer is above all a conversation between God and us through which we open our heart to him in the various circumstances of life. All the readings of this second Sunday of Lent talk about conversation with God and the transformation that enfolds when someone deeply speaks with God.

The first reading recalls the conversation between God and Abraham. In this conversation, God promises to bless Abraham with an abundance of descendants, like the stars in the sky. Trusting in the word of God, Abraham put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.

Because of Abraham's obedience, God seals a covenant with him, making him a partner. According to an ancient covenant right, the animals of sacrifice were divided into two halves and the contracting parties should walk in between, stating that they were willing to be dismembered like animals if they failed to keep the covenant.

What is interesting in this text is the fact that it is God alone who walks in between animals while Abraham was in trance and deep sleep. What this episode means is that God is the first to love us. Whatever we might do because of our faith in him is always preceded by his gratuitous love. He promises his blessing to us without setting any conditions. He is like a faithful and generous husband who says to his wife: "Honey, I will always love you even if it happens that you betray me".

If that is the case, what difference does it make to behave well or to act badly? In fact, if we do not follow God's ways, we will for sure ruin our whole life. But God will always love us, because there is no sin that is stronger than his love.

All that helps us understand why St Paul, in the second reading, encourages us to conduct ourselves according to the model we have been given. We should not conduct ourselves as enemies of the cross of Christ by immoral lives. We should not make our stomach our God or let our minds be occupied only with earthly things. All these things pass away and do not last forever.

Here we hear the cry of what Lent means, that is, the conversion of heart, the transformation of mind and the change of life. We have to set our life on the standards of heaven, because it is there that our true citizenship is. It is there that, thanks to our faithfulness and our firmness in faith, our mortal bodies will be changed in order to conform to the glorified body of Christ.

Today's Gospel gives us a glimpse of that transformation we are waiting for as Jesus is transfigured. Note that up to now, Jesus was used to going to pray alone on the mountains. This time, very exceptionally, he takes with him Peter, John and James so that they might be the witnesses of what will happen to him.

What the transfiguration brings to our awareness is that, if we remain faithful to Jesus until the end, we will certainly share in his glory. The fate of Jesus is our fate and his heritage our heritage. Although our present life is difficult and sometimes crossed by crises, if we stand up firm in faith and change accordingly, we will share one day in Christ's glory.

It is that glory that Jesus shows in anticipation to Peter, John and James. These three disciples represent each one of us and the whole church. They are the eyewitnesses of the miracle of the transfiguration in anticipation of the transformation of our own body in the glory of heaven. They know that from now on they have to discard worldly ambitions and accept trials for the sake of Jesus. But, in the end they will triumph. In their footsteps, we will also share in Jesus' glory in spite of our present situation.

In the transfiguration, Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah. The conversation with these important figures of Israelite history aims to show us that in Jesus are united the Law and the Prophets. For that reason, we have to trust him and accept everything he tells us. He is in the true line with the Law and the prophets; he is the fulfillment of everything they stand for. When we trust him, we are at the right side of history and, therefore, we will have our eternal salvation. If so, what else must we do other than to listen to him?

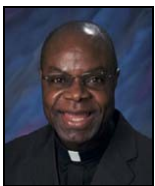
As the voice from the cloud said: "This is my chosen Son; listen to him", Jesus is the beloved of the Father. In that sense, the transfiguration is the revelation of the true identity of Jesus as the Son of God, even if he is not accepted and recognized by all. But we who have accepted him will never be disappointed if we listen to him and do what he recommends us. Once more, the revelation of Jesus as the chosen Son of God says something to us about Lent and the changes we have to bring in our lives according to the words of Jesus.

The scene of the transfiguration teaches us that conversing with God in prayer can change us; it can widen our vision and understanding of things ongoing in our life and in the world. God's grace we receive in prayer can enhance our experience of the transcendent by understanding that there is more to life than simply what we can touch and observe with our senses.

The transfiguration of Jesus gives us courage and hope in our dark moments of life. We know by experience that life is not always easy. There are moments of doubt, despair and hopelessness. In these moments, we have to raise our eyes above, knowing that the meaning of life is not all consumed in what we live. There is always a hope because Christ can transform our suffering into joy. It is that joy that is foreseen in the transfiguration.

Let us offer, then, our Lenten sacrifices to the Lord so that through these practices and through the acceptance of our daily crosses, we may become closer to him. We share the mountain-top experience of Peter, John and James when we spend extra time in prayer. Fasting can help our body store up spiritual energy as it elevates us to God. Our almsgiving brings us close to our fellows who have nothing, as we recognize in them the suffering Christ. May God bless you all!

**Genesis 15, 5-12, 17-18; Philippians 3, 17-4, 1; Luke 9, 28b-36**



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