

2nd Sunday of Lent A/2011

The readings of this second Sunday of Lent talk about the human vocation. The first reading of the book of Genesis describes the vocation of Abraham as God called him to serve him. In fact, it was out of nothing and in an unexpected way that God called Abraham and asked him to leave the land of his fathers for another he indicated to him.

In order to sanction that call, God promised to make not only his name great, but also make his descendents a great nation. Because of his obedience to go as God directed him, God promised to bless all the communities of the earth.

What we learn from this text is, first of all, that like Abraham, God calls anyone of us to serve him. As such, vocation is not limited to some states of life or to some people. Each one can serve God according to his/her gifts and his/her abilities.

This text teaches us also something about the social character of faith. When God calls someone, it is always with a goal of reaching out to many other people through his/her vocation. Therefore, the one who is called becomes God's instrument in order to bring his blessings to others. Beyond the individual vocation, then, God wants to touch the lives of many. This is how, through the obedience of Abraham to work with God, many communities of the earth have been blessed.

This point sheds light on our own personal vocation. We are never called for ourselves or for our personal good. On the contrary, beyond our own vocation, God calls us with a purpose of doing something for his people. We are the representatives of one another before God.

We have to remember, however, that any vocation involves sacrifices, difficulties and hardships. As it was for Abraham, to whom God enjoined to leave the land of his forefathers, so is it for us today. We cannot be true disciples without accepting in our life the part of sacrifice and suffering for the sake of Jesus' kingdom. Whatever might be our hardships and sufferings, however, these are worthwhile, because they constitute the part of our participation in the salvation of our brothers and sisters.

That is exactly what St Paul tells Timothy as he recommends him to bear his share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God. He reminds him that God has not called us because we were holy, but in order to make us holy. He has not called us according to our merits, but according to his grace bestowed upon us in the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

The death of Jesus, indeed, was a real scandal for the disciples who could not imagine and accept the idea of the suffering and crucified Messiah. In order to attenuate their shock, Jesus brings Peter, James and John with him up the mountain so that they might be the witnesses of the glory that will be his at the end of his suffering.

By doing so, Jesus wanted them also to see the glory in which they will share with him, if they remain faithful until the end. Even if the disciples, too, have to go through suffering and persecution, they have to be convinced that they are called to an immense glory with

Jesus in heaven. In that perspective, the three disciples who are chosen to be the witnesses of Jesus' glory are, at the same time, the representatives of the whole group of the disciples and of the Church. The glory they have seen is the glory that awaits us at the end of our pilgrimage on earth.

The transfiguration of Jesus teaches us something about his true identity as the son of God. In fact, when Jesus was still on earth that identity was not completely revealed. That is why the transfiguration is anticipation in advance of what Jesus will be in his resurrection. Therefore, even if he has to go through passion and death, that is not the whole meaning of his life. On the contrary, he is destined to a heavenly glory that will shine at his resurrection.

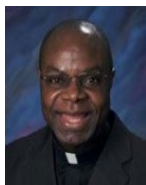
Moreover, by conversing in his transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, two important figures of Israel history, the aim is to show us that in him are united the Law and the Prophets. For that reason, we have to trust him and accept everything he tells us. Not only is he in true line with the Law and the prophets, but he is also the fulfillment of everything they stand for. That is why the disciples have to listen to him and bear witness to him.

When the surprised Peter asks to build three tents for Moses, Elijah and Jesus, he is just expressing one of the characteristics of human nature, namely that when people live exciting moments in their lives, they want to prolong them and keep them tight so that they might not flee. And yet, the transfiguration is given to us only to provide strength for the daily ministry and to enable us to walk the way of the cross.

Because the cross exists, the transfiguration reminds each one of us that, whatever might be the suffering we endure for the sake of our faith, they will have a price. Therefore, if we want to rise one day with Jesus, we have to follow him along the way of the cross.

With regard to the Lenten season, the transfiguration reminds us that silence, contemplation and prayer are important elements of our Christian life, if we want to listen to Jesus who speaks to us. Let us go down from the mountain and give witness about Jesus. Let us pray God in this Lenten season that he give 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 2, 1-8; Matthew 17, 1-9



Homily Date: March 20, 2011

© 2011 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD

Contact: www.mbala.org

Document Name: 20110320homily.pdf