

Second Sunday of Lent C/2016

The readings of this second Sunday of Lent talk about the importance of conversation with God and the transformation it brings into our life.

The first reading recalls the conversation God had with Abram. It shows the promise God made to give him numerous descendants and a rich land. It equally shows how God credited Abram as a righteous man because of his faith. The text ends up by describing the way God made the covenant with Abram through the sacrifice of animals that were offered to him.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is capable of entering a relationship with human beings by making a covenant with them. There is also the idea that God precedes human beings in any relationship he has with them, because the initiative of the covenant comes from him. The last idea is related to the truth of the abundant blessings that God bestows on human beings.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus is transfigured on the mountain. First of all, the Gospel says that Jesus took three of his disciples, namely Peter, John and James, and went up the mountain to pray.

It also shows that while Jesus was still on the top, he was transfigured and Moses and Elijah were conversing with him. Then, it reports how Peter and his companions who, overwhelmed by the scene, wanted to build three tents: one for Jesus, one for Moses and another for Elijah.

After that, the Gospel says that while Jesus was still speaking, a cloud covered them and a voice from heaven recognized him as the chosen son, and the disciples were told to listen to him. The Gospel ends up by showing Jesus alone with the three disciples to whom he imposed silence over the happening.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? Today I want to talk about the prize of victory. In fact, human experience has shown that in order to win a victory someone has to work hard, to keep discipline, and to accept sacrifices. We have seen it many times with sports, like football, basketball, track racing, etc. This is so true that a popular saying says "no pain; no gain".

Why do I refer to such an experience? I do so because I still have in mind my recent trip to Israel and more particularly to the mountain of Tabor where Jesus was transfigured. This is a very high and stiff mountain, on the top of which there is clear sight of the surrounding region.

When I was climbing that mountain, I was thinking about Jesus and the disciples, how it was difficult to make it up to the top. And yet, it was at the top of that mountain that an incredible experience will happen: Jesus was transfigured and he was conversing with Moses and Elijah, the most important figures in Israel's history, one as the founding father of their nation and the other as the greatest of their prophets.

As I was climbing that mountain, I could see in it the symbol of what life means, namely a victory we own only after pain and sufferings. Jesus himself will be the first to do that experience. He will raise from the dead, but he has to pass through passion and death.

Moses and Elijah are conversing with him about what is awaiting him in Jerusalem. And he had to accept it so that God might be glorified through his suffering.

I believe that was the reason why the voice of the Father claimed that Jesus was his chosen one that the whole world, and in particular the disciples, had to listen to. In other words, even if Jesus has to go through suffering, those who will listen to him will be saved; they will share in the same glory he receives from the Father.

In that perspective, it makes good sense that there was a profound reason why Jesus took Peter, John and James with him. But, before coming to that, it is good to stop on the fact of Moses and Elijah conversing with Jesus about the exodus he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.

What type of exodus was it? In fact, it is about the passion and death on the cross that Jesus had to undergo in Jerusalem. The passion and death of Jesus, indeed, are an event that will shock deeply the disciples. Not only would they not like to hear such a thing, but they would also not like it to happen at all. That is why when Jesus spoke of his passion, they were almost scandalized.

In that perspective, in taking the three disciples with him up the mountain, Jesus wants them to be the witnesses of his transformation so that they come to realize that he is destined to glory. Even if he has to go through passion and death, the true meaning of his life is glory, transfiguration and transformation.

The implication to draw from such a perception is quite clear. Although the disciples have also to go through persecution and rejection, they are prepared to share in the glory of Jesus that is already anticipated in his transfiguration. Therefore, beyond the tunnel of suffering, pain and disappointment of this world, there is a light.

We have always to remember that those three disciples represent us and the whole Church. What they have witnessed is what we will become. Therefore, in spite of our present state of crisis, pain, suffering and disappointment, everything will change for the best. The dark moments of our life are transitory and not permanent. One day, we will share in the glory of Christ. It might take time before it comes, but eventually it will come. That day we will see him face to face as we will see the light coming beyond the tunnel.

Let us pray, then, that God may help us to listen to Jesus and to trust him in everything that happens in our life. Let us ask him to give us the courage to support with perseverance and in faith the suffering of the present time with the conviction that we will share in the resurrection of Jesus. May God bless you all!

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



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