

Second Sunday of Lent A2023

Faith is a demanding adventure. It requires very often sacrifices. But instead of being vain sacrifices, they always have a prize: a Blessing. God will never ask of us a sacrifice or a detachment without giving us the grace to fulfill it, and eventually, a blessing.

Abraham was the first to experience that truth. God asked him to abandon the house of his fathers, to quit the land of his ancestors and to go where he would show him. His acceptance prompted God's blessing: "I will make of you a great nation (...), I will make your name great (...), All the nations of the earth will be blessed in you."

The promise of blessing does not diminish at all the price of suffering that comes with detachment and sacrifice. To come to glory one might but pass through suffering. Suffering here does not mean necessarily physical suffering, but also sacrifice that one imposes on himself in order to succeed and attain the goal of his mission.

It is in that sense we have to understand the recommendations of St Paul to Timothy to bear his share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God. St Paul 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 obtained us through 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 of the 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.

Jesus' glory is that in which the disciples will share. Even if they have to go through suffering and persecution, they have to be convinced that they are called to share in the glory of Jesus. Then, it becomes clear that the three friends were above all witnesses and representatives of the whole group of the disciples and the whole Church. The glory they have seen is the glory that awaits us at the end of our pilgrimage on earth.

In the transfiguration, Jesus' identity is fully revealed as the Beloved Son of the Father with whom he is pleased. The transfiguration is the anticipation of what Jesus will be in his resurrection and the glory of heaven. Even if he has to go through passion and death, that is not the whole meaning of his life. He is destined to a heavenly glory that will shine when God's time will be fulfilled.

The transfiguration is an anticipation of the fate of the Church. It is like a show room of what we will be. As we profess every Sunday in the Credo: I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. That which we are waiting for is given anticipatively in the transfiguration. The transfiguration reminds that our hope of heaven and the resurrection to eternal glory is not in vain. Like the three disciples we will be transformed and share in the glory of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

To have access to that glory requires of us only one thing, that is, the capacity of listening to the Beloved Son of the Father. This is challenging because we live in society that makes too much noise and in which people are afraid of silence. Silence very often brings to the surface the wounds people hide within them.

Besides it, there is the whole range of the questions about the way of listening: How do we listen? Do you listen with your head or your heart? What do you listen to? How often do we listen to Jesus? 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?

The transfiguration reminds us that silence, contemplation and prayer are important moments of our Christian life. Jesus speaks to us in the Scriptures and in the silence of our hearts. The only way to do his will and walk in his footsteps is to listen to him.

Lent is a time of making silence, in prayer, in order to listen to the Lord who speaks to us. We need to get out of our continual agitations, to create an atmosphere of peace around us and within 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 his transfiguration, Jesus is in conversation with Moses and Elijah, two important figures of Israel history. In Jesus are united the Law and the Prophets. Jesus is in perfect accord with the Law and the prophets. He is the fulfillment of everything they stand for.

When the surprised Peter asks to build three tents for Moses, Elijah and Jesus, he is just reacting like anyone of us would do, 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 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 prize. Therefore, if we want to rise one day with Jesus, we have to follow him along the way of the cross.

May the discipline of Lenten Season 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 triumphing in the resurrection.

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



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