

## Second Sunday of Lent B2024

Last Sunday, I said that Lent is a time of fight against the evil. In this fight we are not alone; we are with our Lord Jesus, who fought Satan in the desert, but won victory over him. If we follow him and remain faithful to him, we too will win victory.

Today, the second Sunday reminds us that Lent is also a time of making a radical choice in favor God. The first reading of the book of Genesis shows what that choice in practice means. It shows how Abraham, without any hesitation, made the difficult choice of sacrificing his only son, heir of his house and the only one on whom he could count to perpetuate his blood.

Although sacrificing Isaac would have stripped Abraham of any support and hope for the future of his house, he kept his faith in the love and fidelity of God even when confronted with such an extreme demand. He knew that God, who made the impossible possible by giving him Isaac, was also able to protect him even when he asked to sacrifice him.

Abraham is the symbol of everyone who does not cling to his own privilege, who does not care for his own interests, but who looks at what he can do for God even if he does not understand clearly God's demand. By renouncing what God gave him, Abraham chose God alone. By renouncing the gift received through Promise, he kept only the Promise.

In that complete stripping where God is ultimately chosen, everything is given back, the blessing, the descendants and the land. Thus, we understand that any sacrifice we accept for the sake of God's Kingdom, any suffering we accept because of our discipleship, will never remain without a reward. We can be tested and tempted, but if we stand at God's side, if we accept him instead of denying him, he will give us back a hundredfold, beyond our merit and expectations.

The faith of Abraham gives us strength and courage when we are anxious to know that God is with us in all our difficulties of life. Abraham believed in God blindly; he left his country, gave up the security of his house and the protection that came from his family and tribe. He severed all his links with his past, because he was sure that God would keep his promise. We need the same trust and faithfulness in our time of trouble and trial. It is the same faith that led him in the important and decisive moment of choice. Without faith we will never come to decisive choice in our relationship with God.

Abraham is also the symbol of God himself, who did not spare his only Son, but handed him over for us, as St Paul says in the second reading. All those who choose our Lord and are obedient to him, the Father will give them everything with him. Our Lord, on his part, cannot condemn his best friends, the sinners for whom he laid down his life. Perhaps, someone would be attempted to say that their sins would testify against them. But that too will be impossible, because our Lord died to destroy the sins of all humans.

How would God accuse or Christ condemn those for whom he died? For sure, God is the only one who could witness against us, since he alone knows how things really stand. But, how would he accuse us he has already acquitted by giving his own son to die for our salvation. If there is condemnation, it is only for those who refuse to choose Christ and his Father. Think about that, my friends, on this time of Lent and make a good choice in favor of God.

Let me come back to the figure of Isaac. Isaac himself is the symbol of Christ who will sacrifice his life on the cross for us. Isaac prefigured Christ who, in today's Gospel, is transfigured by God's glory on the mountain. Like Isaac, Christ is God's free gift to the world. Like Isaac, Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. However, unlike Isaac, Jesus will be the sacrifice which brings about salvation to the world. Unlike Isaac, Christ does go on mountain today not to be sacrificed, but to reveal his true nature.

The context preceding the transfiguration is our Lord's announcement of his passion that saddened a lot his disciples. Like many among the Jewish people, the disciples were caught up in popular imagination. They expected a glorious messiah, rich and powerful ruler, capably of rapidly changing the condition of humankind and of restoring the kingdom of God on earth. And yet, that is not what our Lord was.

For sure, our Lord was a Messiah, but a suffering one who had to pass through suffering and death. That idea of suffering was very difficult for the disciples to understand and to accept. That is why our Lord who was used to go alone to pray on the mountain took, this time, with him Peter, James and John, so that they might witness the glory the Father has prepared for him. The same glory would also be that which the disciples will receive if they remain faithful until the end. Thus, even they too might go through suffering and persecution, they were called to an immense glory with our Lord in heaven.

If our Lord speaks with Moses and Elijah, it is to show to the disciples that in him are united the Law and the prophets. They should trust him and accept him even if he is not a messiah in the line of popular expectation. He is the fulfillment of everything that Moses and Elijah stand for. In this context, what else to do, then, than to listen to him, as claim the voice from the cloud? I strongly believe that one of the challenges of Lent is to listen to our Lord. Without listening to him, we will ever make bad choices in life.

The transfiguration of our Lord is a strong reminder to each of us that we have to choose Christ, whatever it may cost us. The transfiguration of our Lord sheds light on our own suffering. What comes at the end of our life or any choice we make in favor of God will be the glory and joy of seeing him face to face. If we want to rise one day with our Lord, we must follow him along the way of the cross. Let us ask the grace of courage to follow Christ along the same paths.

**Genesis 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Romans 8: 31b-34; Mark 9: 2-10**



Homily Date: February 25, 2024

© 2024 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD

Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)

Document Name: 20240225homily.pdf