

Scripture Study

Second Sunday of Lent – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Genesis 12:1-4a

(Ps 33:4-5,18-20,22)

2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Matthew 17:1-9

Overview of the Gospel:

- Six days after Peter has professed his faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 16:18) and just after Jesus has predicted his Passion, he takes Peter, James and John to the top of Mt. Tabor. There he is transfigured in appearance, revealing for an instant the heavenly glory that he always possesses, but is veiled in his humanity.
- As elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' experience parallels that of Moses as related in the Book of Exodus: both go up a mountain on the seventh day (Exodus 24:13, 15, 16); both take three companions (Exodus 24:1); both events involve God speaking through a heavenly voice (Exodus 24:16); both involve the glory cloud (*shekinah*) of God's presence, and both of their faces shine with God's glory (Exodus 34:29).
- By his transfiguration, Jesus confirms that he is the Son of God and strengthens the faith of his disciples after the prediction of his Passion (Matthew 16:21-26). Not only is the Transfiguration a foreshadowing of Christ's glory, but also a promise of ours (Romans 8:16-17).

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, Abram (later renamed by God "Abraham") receives a call from a God unknown to him to leave everything to travel to a land he's never seen. What great virtue of Abraham's enabled him to do this? How am I called to exercise that same virtue?
- In the 2nd Reading, how many gifts bestowed upon you by God can you pick out? What is the accomplished or desired result or product of each gift?
- It's been six days since Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ and Jesus predicted his own death. Why is that information important for what happens next? Who does Jesus invite as witnesses? Why only three (Deuteronomy 19:5)? Why these three (Mark 5:37, 14:33; Galatians 2:9)? What was inappropriate about Peter's response to this event?
- Why did Moses and Elijah appear? Whom do they represent (Matthew 5:17, 7:12)?
- What is significant in what the voice from the cloud says about Jesus (see Exodus 24:15)? Why does Jesus silence the disciples afterwards (verse 9)?
- How did you come to know that Jesus was the One above all others that you should listen to? What do you do to obey the command of the Father to listen to his Son? How has God said to you, "This is my beloved son [or daughter], with whom I am well pleased"?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 554-556, 444-445

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings this week!

Our whole business therefore in this life is to restore to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen... To this end is directed the whole aim of the Divine and Holy Scriptures, that the interior eye may be purged of anything which hinders us from the sight of God. -St. Augustine

"This is my beloved Son; listen to him"

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 17:1-9*

Meditation: What does the Lord want to make of you in this season of Lent? God made a promise to Abraham that he would make his name great so that he would be a blessing not only to his family but to all the families of the earth as well (Genesis 12:3)! The condition for the fulfillment of this promise was simple and straightforward – "Go to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Abraham not only believed in God's word, he obeyed and did as the Lord commanded him.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises made to Abraham and to his spiritual descendants. He succeeded because he obeyed his Father's will. Jesus knew that the only way to glory in God's kingdom was by yielding his will to the will of the Father. We catch a glimpse of this glory when Jesus takes three of his disciples to a lonely place on a high mountain. Jesus often went to a lonely place to pray – to seek solitude and sanctuary away from the crowds. But on this occasion, the Gospel of Luke tells us that as Jesus "was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white." (Luke 9:29). Matthew states simply that Jesus was "transfigured before them".

When Moses met with God on Mount Sinai *the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God* (see Exodus 34:29). Paul says that *the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness* (2 Corinthians 3:7). In this incident Jesus appeared in glory with Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and with Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, in the presence of three of his beloved apostles.

What is the significance of this mysterious appearance? Jesus went to the mountain knowing full well



what awaited him in Jerusalem – his betrayal, rejection and crucifixion. Jesus very likely discussed this momentous decision to go to the cross with Moses and Elijah. God the Father also spoke with Jesus and gave his approval: *This is my beloved Son; listen to him*. The Father glorified his son because he obeyed. The cloud which overshadowed Jesus and his apostles fulfilled the dream of the Jews that when the Messiah came the cloud of God's presence would fill the temple again (see Exodus 16:10, 19:9, 33:9; 1 Kings 8:10; 2 Maccabees 2:8).

The Lord Jesus not only wants us to see his glory – he wants to share this glory with us. And Jesus shows us the way to the Father's glory – follow me – obey my words – take the path I have chosen for you and you will receive the blessings of my Father's kingdom – your name will be written in heaven. Jesus succeeded in his mission because he went to Calvary so that Paradise would be restored to us once again. He embraced the cross to obtain the crown of glory that awaits each of us, if we will follow in his footsteps.

Origen, the great 3rd century bible scholar, shows us how the transfiguration can change our lives: "When he is transfigured, his face also shines as the sun that he may be

manifested to the children of light who have put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, and are no longer the children of darkness or night but have become the sons of day, and walk honestly as in the day. Being manifest, he will shine unto them not simply as the sun, but as demonstrated to be the sun of righteousness."

Luke's gospel tells us that while Jesus was transfigured, Peter, James, and John were asleep (Luke 9:32)! Upon awakening they discovered Jesus in glory along with Moses and Elijah. How much do we miss of God's glory and action because we are asleep spiritually? There are many things which can keep our minds asleep to the things of God: Mental lethargy and the "unexamined life" can keep us from thinking things through and facing our doubts and questions. The life of ease can also hinder us from considering the challenging or disturbing demands of Christ. Prejudice can make us blind to something new the Lord may have for us. Even sorrow can be a block until we can see past it to the glory of God. Are you spiritually awake? Peter, James, and John were privileged witnesses of the glory of Christ. We, too, as disciples of Christ are called to be witnesses of his glory. *We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit* (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Lord wants to reveal his glory to us, his beloved disciples. Do you seek his presence with faith and reverence?

"Lord Jesus, keep me always alert and awake to you, to your word, your action, and your daily presence in my life. Let me see your glory."

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