

2nd Sunday Lent -Year "C"

February 20-21, 2016

*This is my chosen Son; listen to Him.*

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

In the Church's wisdom, we are given the account of the Transfiguration just about at the same time that we have begun to realize the arduous spiritual work of Lent ahead for the month. Last week we were reminded of the power of temptation, and this week we are given a glimpse into the glory that awaits God's faithful in the glory of heaven. Perhaps the Church does this to remind us that our sacrifices will be worth it; they do count for something.

A primary lesson centers upon our human need to be reassured, to know that we are safe, that we are on the right path. Absent this sense, we become extremely troubled, pensive, and perhaps even discouraged. When we begin to feel this way, it is not uncommon to seek to look for reasons outside of ourselves to account for our unease. This is surely a two-edged sword.

On the one hand, we seek re-assurance in and through our faith. Yet, if for whatever reason that reassurance is lacking, we tend to desire to assign blame. Why do I not feel at peace, why am I not feeling reassured? Some feel as though their Faith has let them down. "Look at all that is wrong in the Church", they say.

Strangely, there is often a fine line between love and disdain. We know this from human relationships. Ask any young adult after a difficult breakup with a girlfriend or boyfriend, and you may hear some very strong words about the other person in the relationship. I do not think that our relationship with the Church is very different.

I feel blessed that my Catholic Faith has been a refuge, yet anyone who is serious about the Faith has felt frustration or hurt at some point. I would be dishonest if I exempted myself from that number. We all can list our areas of frustration, disappointment or anger.

The real question centers on whether or not we allow those concerns- however valid they may be- to paralyze us? Will they overpower us?

Over twenty-six years of priestly ministry has taught me that some people only seem to be happy when they are unhappy. No amount of reassurance can seem to overcome the many burdens they feel, even those who truly love their faith. But they are never at peace, and until they find it, they will remain miserable. Worse still, they try to pass that unhappiness to others.

If I am miserable, then at least you can be miserable with me. Too often, these people tend to transfer those feelings and attitudes to others, and it can be poisonous. It is also true that our journey of faith is not always clear. The way is set out for us, but the darkness of sin can obscure it. Pope Benedict XVI remarked on the Transfiguration:

*“Human existence is a journey of faith and, as such, goes forward more in darkness than in full light, with moments of obscurity and even profound darkness. While we are here, our relationship with God develops more with listening than with seeing; and even contemplation takes place, so to speak, with closed eyes, thanks to the interior light lit in us by the word of God.”*<sup>1</sup>

In that moment of transfiguration, the Father was indeed present in the Son, and in that brightness of the Lord, the nature of God was not separated from His only-begotten Son. We are told that “while he was speaking a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened...” It is understandable that the disciples became frightened, for they had not seen anything like this before.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Angelus* Address, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent (March 12, 2006).

Overshadowed by a cloud, we may feel as though we are being swallowed up in fear. We cannot handle being overshadowed by pain, suffering, uncertainty or doubt. So we too quickly look to facile explanations, because at least we are comfortable with having an answer.

What happens with fear is that it paralyzes us, and it casts out love. When we are without peace, we will not love fully, and we will most assuredly try to assign blame to others. What we need is reassurance. Jesus teaches us that perfect love casts our fear, and so in the midst of the darkness and struggles of life, we would do well to keep this in mind.

The Church is the Bride of Christ, even in the midst of terrible struggles; Christ is our Savior, even when it seems so many ignore His teachings. He is no less our Savior because he is ignored.

This is why Jesus gives us glimpses of himself more profoundly, lest we fall under the weight of uncertainty. The transfiguration happened in order to strengthen the faith of the disciples, to give them a sense of hope. We too need this hope, even as we try to more faithfully embrace the Cross throughout this season of Lent.

For now, we simply thank the Lord for the glimpse of glory, and ask for the grace to carry on another week, another month another year in our journey of faith.