

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT, B

HE WAS TRANSFIGURED THAT WE MAY BE TRANSFORMED

“There in their presence he was transfigured ... and there came a voice from the cloud, ‘This is My Son, the beloved. Listen to Him’ (Mk. 9: 2, 7)

We read today, as in every Second Sunday of Lent, the narrative of the Transfiguration of Jesus in the gospel. The common theme that runs through is the theme of transformation. In the First Reading (Gen. 22: 1-2, 9-13, 15-18) Abraham demonstrates his faithfulness and trust in God by his obedience, which transforms his life by making him a supreme model of faith for us all. In the Second Reading (Rom. 8: 31-34), St Paul reminds us of God’s ultimate love for us, which has the power to transform us if we open ourselves to it. In the Gospel (Mk. 9: 2-10), the Transfiguration of Jesus is an invitation to us to have a glimpse of the glory that we long for in order to encourage us to let the Word of God transform us from living for ourselves to living for others and for Christ. The season of Lent is the season of transfiguration – He was transfigured that we might be transformed. Let us explain some of the details in order to understand and sift out the deeper challenges that the message has for us.

In Isaac, we see Jesus: Isaac was Abraham’s only son. His “beloved son.” Jesus is God’s Only Begotten Son. His Beloved Son. Abraham had reasons to guard his son because he was a child of his very old age, with his wife, Sarah, at the age of eighty. He was the only son even though God promised that his children will as numberless as the stars and the sand on the sea shore (Gen. 15: 5; 22: 17). Abraham did not doubt God’s love nor His faithfulness to His promise even though he had no idea how that would turn out. Abraham’s faith demonstrates God generous love that “did not spare His Own Son, but gave Him up for the benefit of us all” (Rom. 8: 32). For just as Abraham did not resist the sacrifice of his only and beloved son, so did God not spare His Only Begotten Son. Isaac freely laid himself or allowed himself to be bound down by Abraham, just as Christ freely offered His hands to be nailed to the wood of the Cross. Isaac prefigured our Lord in that he carried the wood of his intended sacrifice on his shoulder, and he was to be sacrificed on the hill. Through obedience Abraham was blessed; our blessings also come from obedience and selfless service to Christ’s love. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his only and beloved son is a lesson in detachment. I wonder how many of us would have been

willing to let go the only thing we treasure because God wants us to do so. We must be detached in order to be transformed. We cannot cling to the old and become new at the same time.

And He was Transfigured: All the synoptic gospels give the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17: 1-9; Mk. 9: 1-10; Lk. 9: 28-36) showing the importance of this event in the Life and Person of Jesus. The Transfiguration was to confirm that the Passion is in accordance with the Will of the Father; a fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, which Moses and Elijah represent. St. Luke is very clear about the mission of these iconic figures of the Old Testament: “They were telling Him (Jesus) about His departure that was about to take place in Jerusalem” (Lk. 9: 31). St. John relates the interconnectedness of the Cross and the glory in the life of Jesus by pointing out that the Cross is Jesus’ exaltation and the only way to accomplish this exaltation is by embracing the Cross (Jn. 17: 1-5; Phil. 2: 9). The chosen apostles, Peter, James and John, were given the privilege to experience the revelation of Jesus’ glory so that they might discard their conception of Jesus as a political Messiah, and be convinced of His divinity so that they may be strengthened in their time of trial. The mountain, the place of the Transfiguration, is a unique place in the lives of Moses, Elijah and Jesus: a place of transforming divine encounter – as the Sinai was for Moses, Horeb for Elijah. In the life of Jesus, we remember the mountains of temptation, preaching (beatitudes) and prayer; the mountain of His agony; mountain of the Cross; and the mountain of His Resurrection. The mountain is a place of solitude; of outward and inward ascent to be with “The Alone.” The visible sign of the Transfiguration was the change of Jesus’ garment into “dazzling white” garment. In Apocalyptic literature, “white garment” is a symbol of heavenly beings – the garments of angels and the elect. Those who were saved and “washed by the Blood of the Lamb” dressed in white (Rev. 7: 9, 13, 14; 19: 14). It is also a sign of the holiness to which all God’s children, saved by Christ are called in imitation of our Perfect Father in heaven.

“And a cloud came ... and there came a voice ... This is My Son, the Beloved. Listen to Him”: The cloud, the *Shekinah*, is the symbol of God’s presence. The apostles were amazed at the awesomeness of this divine Self-revelation and out of fear and joyful ecstasy, Peter spoke up: “Lord, it is good to be here. Let us build three tents, one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” The desire for permanence reminds us of the longing of the Psalmist: One day within Your house is better than a

thousand elsewhere” (Ps. 84: 10). Such should be our desire, especially at this time of Lent. Then God speaks identifying Jesus in clear and distinct terms: “This is My Son., The Beloved.” God has never addressed anyone in such so personally; even when it seemed so, it was in reference to Jesus (Ps. 2: 7; Heb. 5: 5). Jesus is The Son of God, the Messiah, the Anointed One. As the eternal Word, God commands: “Listen to Him.” Pope Benedict XVI says: “While we are on this earth, our relationship with God takes place more by listening than by seeing ... And so, this is the gift and duty for each one of us during the season of Lent: to listen to Christ, like Mary. To listen to Him in His word, contained in the Scripture. To listen to Him in the events of our lives, seeking to decipher in them the messages of Providence. Finally, to listen to Him in our brothers and sisters, especially, in the lowly and the poor, for whom Christ Himself demands our concrete love.”

My dear friends, during this Lent, let allow the obedience of Abraham to challenge us to seek to do God’s Will in all things. Let us respond like Peter practically by desiring to be in God’s presence; and deeply so by opening ourselves to hearing Jesus speak to us in the Word of the Gospels, in the events of our lives and in the poor. Let these encounters transform our lives so that we may have that personal transfiguration that marks us out as the “Jesuses” our world needs to see in this doom, darkness and despair.