

The Deacon's Bench



The Second Sunday of Lent

By Deacon
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Reflections
on Sacred
Scripture

Last week on the First Sunday of Lent, we heard about Jesus' humanity and how he was tempted to cling to the prerogatives of his divinity. He chose to embrace our humanity.

In the wilderness he was hungry, feeling tempted to taking matters in his own hand. But Jesus "... Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Phil. 2: 6-7 NIV). And so, during his public life he appeared to be an ordinary man, a human being like any other – even in the face of the mighty deeds he performed. But today we have a stunning glimpse of his divinity – Transfiguration! Foretaste enough to sustain his disciples through the grueling Passion and death to follow before resurrection came. Transfiguration is a revelation and a promise that "He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body" (Phil. 3:21).

The Transfiguration event is placed between the twin predictions Jesus makes to his disciples about his coming Passion and death in Jerusalem – the destination of the journey they (and we) are traveling. He is teaching them about suffering, a theme that appears in all our readings today. But Jesus is not describing a suffering just for the sake of torment, but as a process through which resurrection and glorification is achieved.

Matthew, concerned to make the event relatable to his Jewish Christian community, describes a scene reminiscent of the giving of the Law to Moses around 1300 years earlier: the location is on a high mountain, there is a cloud of divine presence and a thunderous voice coming from heaven. Along with Moses, Elijah appears with them on that mountain, representing all the prophets, Here is Elijah who was predicted to return before the Messiah arrives.

How does this connect with us now? Our lives are so far removed from two or three thousand years ago we may wonder about the relevance of these events as dramatic as the story may be. The Lectionary has placed selections from Genesis and from the Letter to Timothy around the Gospel passage to help us see. Abram is asked to separate himself from family, kin, and homeland to follow God's invitation to a new life with a new promise. In embracing our Baptismal call, we too are called to separate ourselves from all that hinders our embrace of God's will for our lives. And in the Letter to Timothy, Saint Paul exhorts us to "bear your share of hardship" that this might entail because Jesus has destroyed death, death - that 'veil that hangs over all of humanity'. Transfiguration promises eternal life.

Listen carefully to the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer the priest will pray on our behalf today: "For after he had told the disciples of his coming Death, on the holy mountain he manifested to them his glory, to show, even by the testimony of the law and the prophets, that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection." Today we are called by the Father to follow Jesus and to live as he lived, to live in the hope of resurrection even in the face of suffering and difficulties: "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him"