

HOMILY ~ MARCH 13, 2022 SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Mountains, for us ordinary people, suggest peace, rest, vacation and beauty. In Sacred Scriptures, mountains are known to be places of prayer. In the life of Jesus Christ, after his day's hectic schedule, he went to the mountains in order to pray and to be in union with his Father. Mountains are also powerful symbols of encounter with God. Hence, to speak of mountains is to expect an encounter with the divine. Like an ordinary mountaintop experience, an encounter with the Lord strengthens, renews and prepares the faithful for the mission God entrusted as we live one's daily Christian life. It's like attending a retreat.

In today's Gospel, it's about the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain. The word 'transfiguration' means a change in form or appearance. It is the same as the Greek word *metamorphosis* which the students and teachers of science are very much familiar. The transfiguration event depicts a glimpse of Christ's glory and a preview of his resurrection. But why does the Church put this particular Gospel in the readings of every Second Sunday of the year during the Lenten season?

First, to confirm us in our faith that Jesus is truly God and truly Son of God.

Second, to make us reflect and to remember that if Christ was transfigured though God, we, his followers, should also strive to be transfigured, to be changed in the newness of our minds and hearts.

Third, as what I have said that transfiguration is a preview of his resurrection and glory. The church reminds us that this glorious event has to be achieved through suffering and pain. This truth applies to all of us. Hence, the sayings, 'no guts, no glory,' 'no pain, no gain,' 'no cross, no crown.'

But before his transfiguration, in the first part of the Gospel, St. Luke writes: "**While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white,**" (v. 29). In other words, he prayed. By means of prayer, Jesus is glorified and his appearance changes. What is the connection between prayer and transfiguration?

They went up to the mountains in order to pray. Prayer is the time to connect the gap between him and us and to align our thinking with God. Why? It is because there are times that we try to adjust God's thinking to ours, as when Peter tried to change Jesus' mind about suffering and death but he was told: "Satan, get behind me." We should not get ahead of God to show him the way. Instead, we have to follow him. We can go to God and talk to him not only about our own problems, the broken pieces of our lives, the sad things and the things we are missing, but also the beautiful things we have received but took for granted, all the talents and abilities and the resources which are still

unused. Prayer is not in the first place, asking for good things. It is a transfiguration on our part. We can re-evaluate our commitment and find new vision in our lives.

Prayer transforms and changes us. Jesus' face changed when he prayed and his clothing became dazzling white. God's love and mercy shine forth in our hearts and in our relationship. When we pray we cannot get rid of revenge, with jealousy or anger in our hearts, but our hearts and outlook in life certainly will change. We become holy through our prayers. Prayer helps us to become more loving and wise. Through prayer we come closer to God.

Prayer gives strength. Prayer gives us strength to go on with our life. We may feel that we are not alone because God is with us.

Prayer makes us move on. Meeting God in prayer is important. It is like stopping at a gas station during a very long trip. We buy gasoline for the next trip. We can ask for directions and even stretch out our legs. Prayer also gives us orientation and energy to go on. It is not a withdrawal from life, but a needed stop to continue with a renewed confidence and strength in God.

I found a very beautiful prayer that one could say after receiving Holy Communion and during those visits to the Blessed Sacrament. With head bowed, eyes closed and hand over heart, pray the **A-L-T-A-R** prayer:

A – dore the Lord, who is in your heart. Accept him with joy, humility and love.

L – isten to the Lord, who is in your heart. What is he telling you in the silence of your heart?

T – hank the Lord for his goodness and love, for his forgiveness and patience even for your challenges and problems.

A – sk the Lord for anything you need. Ask not only for yourself but for others too.

R – Rejoice in the Lord, whatever you're going through. Be glad, be hopeful because Jesus is in your heart and because he will be with you always.

My dear friends, let us listen to Jesus, the transfigured one in prayer and follow faithfully, religiously as transfigured people of God. Let us spend more time in prayer. Praying is not trying to get God on our side but making sure we are on God's side and bring us closer to him who lives within our heart.

In Christ,

Deacon Don