

Readings for March 17, 2019 -- Second Sunday in Lent

Thin Moments

Somewhere along the road to Jerusalem, and the road to Easter, Jesus allows us a "mountaintop" experience of seeing the complete glory of God -- the fulfillment of a heavenly plan that reaches back to Adam and includes the struggles of Moses and Elijah. In case the disciples (and the rest of us) don't get it, we hear the voice of God urging us to "listen to him!"

Opening Prayer: (See back pages)

Reading 1 GN 15:5-12, 17-18

The Lord God took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. He then said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession." "O Lord GOD," he asked, "how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He answered him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Abram brought him all these, split them in two, and placed each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut up. Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram stayed with them. As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces. It was on that occasion that the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates."

Responsorial Psalm PS 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14.

R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call;
have pity on me, and answer me.
Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Your presence, O LORD, I seek.
Hide not your face from me;
do not in anger repel your servant.
You are my helper: cast me not off.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
in the land of the living.
Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.
R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Reading 2 PHIL 3:17–4:1

Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

Gospel LK 9:28B-36

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

Related Reflections

God the Father says it to everyone: to me, to you, to everyone, all people! ..."Listen to Jesus!" Don't forget. (Pope Francis)

Sometimes circumstances conspire to remind us or even let us glimpse how thin the membrane is between birth and the grave, between the human and the divine. (Anne Lamott)

We treasure the crucifix because it is the symbol of God's love made manifest to us. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that we should not die but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Could anything be more glorious than this love? The glory of Christ is shown on the cross!

But in the Gospel reading for this Sunday, we see Christ glorious in a more obvious and ordinary way. Up on a mountain, Christ is transfigured. His clothes are radiant, and so is he. Moses and Elijah come to talk to him. And a voice from heaven proclaims that Jesus is God's beloved Son, in whom God is well-pleased. In this transfiguration, Christ looks both lovely and powerful, a winner rather than a loser on anybody's view. And Christ takes just Peter, James, and John up to the mountain to see his transfiguration.

Why would Christ allow himself to be transfigured in this way before his passion? And why would Christ want to show himself transfigured to his followers? Shouldn't his suffering be for us the right way to understand true glory?

Maybe the reason for his transfiguration shares something with the reason for his resurrection. If Christ had not been resurrected, we might have supposed that suffering (or at least, suffering for the Lord) is all there is to glory. And then we might have gotten confused and thought that there is something specially good about suffering taken all by itself. Maybe Christ allows himself to be transfigured so that his followers will understand even before the grieving events of the crucifixion that suffering is not the end of the story, not for Christ and not for his followers either.

But then why do only Peter, James, and John witness Christ in glory in this way? Well, these three apostles went on to suffer greatly for Christ. James and Peter were among the first martyrs, and John shepherded the church through severe persecutions. Christ helped them get ready for those trials by strengthening them with the vision of his transfiguration. Consolation increases with affliction, the apostle Paul says ([2 Cor 1:5](#)). That is a consoling thought for us, isn't it?

(Eleanore Stump -

www.liturgy.slu.edu)

I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness.

(John 12:46)

Suggested reflection activity: (Adapted from Loyolapress.com/retreats -- 3 minute retreats)

None of the disciples could have anticipated what they witnessed that day on the mountain. Jesus, their teacher and friend, was transfigured before their very eyes. From then on, there could be no doubt about who Jesus really was. The disciples caught a glimpse of Jesus' divinity that changed how they would think and relate to him. There are moments when we, too, catch glimpses of the divine. Those glimpses change how we understand God and how we relate to one another.

Reflect back on the last few days. Where have I glimpsed God in the people and events around me?

How does the service I do for others reflect my reverence for God, who dwells in them?

What is it in my own life that needs to be opened to the brightness of transfiguration?

Discussion Questions

- If you are willing, share some thoughts from the meditation activity above. When have you had one of those “God moments?” When has God graced you with a glimpse of the divine? What was it like? How did it change you?
- What does transformation of my own life ask of me at this time?
- How can I remember to live in the light of the transfigured Lord? How can this help to relieve my fears, and help me to move forward more confidently on my faith journey?
- In the Transfiguration, the disciples were invited to behold Jesus in his glory -- to stop talking and listen to him. Do I take time to really stop talking and do some deep listening?
- In what other ways does God reveal his full glory to us in this world?
- Jesus allowed this glimpse of his transfigured self to people who would carry on his work (prophets from the past, as well as his disciples). What do you think that says to us. Are we also prophets for each other?

Closing Prayer:

Good and gracious God, reveal your invisible presence to me.

Give me eyes to see your presence reflected in the visible realities of this world.

Through your Word, the Sacraments, and through others, help me to gain deeper access to your loving and merciful presence.

Teach me your language of mystery that I may encounter “deep-down things” such as your love and grace in all things visible and invisible.

Grant me many thin moments in my daily living – moments in which your mystery is revealed and yet remains hidden. Amen

(Adapted from Living the Sacraments, by Joe Paprocki, Loyola Press)

Suggested Music

O God Beyond All Praising (Sarah Kroger)

Light Up the Sky (The Afters)

Our God (Chris Tomlin)