

Sunday, March 1, 2015

Second Sunday of Lent

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18

Responsorial: Psalm 116:10,15-19

2nd Reading: Romans 8:31-34

Gospel: Mark 9:2-10

Lent, A Time to Experience the Transforming Power of Christ

He was transfigured before them. (Mark 9:2)

Have you ever wondered why Jesus was transfigured? He never announced it. His apostles never suspected it. The event was never repeated. So why did he do it? Let's look at a bigger picture to try to get some answers. From the day he first called them, Jesus showed his disciples that he had come from God. He performed many miracles. He taught with authority. He revealed God's mercy. Then when he asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah" (Mark 8:29).

This was a breakthrough moment. The disciples were beginning to believe in Jesus, but their faith still needed to grow. They still didn't understand what kind of Messiah Jesus was. They didn't understand that he had to die—or that they had to take up the cross as well (Mark 8:31-35).

So the Transfiguration proved that Jesus wasn't just another prophet of God; he was God's Son! It also showed that even though Jesus had to die, he would also rise to a glory beyond their imagining.

God transfigured Jesus as a way of strengthening the disciples—and all of us as well. It was a moment of encouragement before they started their journey to Jerusalem, the place of the cross. But more than this, the Transfiguration gives us a glimpse of the glory that Jesus had before coming to earth, the same glory that he now enjoys as he sits on his heavenly throne. And even more than this, the Transfiguration is a promise for us. It reveals the glory that awaits each of us at the end of our lives—if we remain faithful to the Lord.

We are all works in progress. We all have our flaws. But we are also being "transfigured" day after day. So accept Jesus' invitation. Follow him, and you'll be changed "from glory to glory" as your faith continues to grow (2 Corinthians 3:18).

"Here I am, Lord, ready to do your will. Fill me with your grace. Let me know your transforming power."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

Sunday, March 1, 2015

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. In the first reading, God tests Abraham with these words: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and ... offer him up as a holocaust." When Abraham demonstrates his faith in God by his willingness to obey this heart wrenching command to sacrifice Isaac, he is stopped with these words from the Lord's messenger: "I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." In what ways do words such as "only one" and "beloved son" remind you of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross? What are the similarities and what are the differences? (Hint: see John 3:16.)
2. In the first reading from last Sunday's Mass, God formed a covenant with Noah. In this week's reading, he makes one with Abraham: "I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars . . . all this because you have obeyed my command." God may never ask you to do what he asked of Noah and Abraham. However, in what areas of your life do you think God may be asking you to obey him more (and resist him less)?
3. In the responsorial Psalm, the psalmist prays: "I believed even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'" He goes on to say: "you have loosed my bonds." This was the same faith Abraham displayed in the first reading. In your times of "afflictions," what are the things that keep you from turning confidently to the Lord and believing he can loose your bonds? What are the things that allow you to turn confidently to the Lord, and be set free?
4. The second reading from Romans begins with these words: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" How would you describe, from the reading, what St. Paul believes is the Christian's first and final answer in times of difficulty, despair, suffering, and fear? How can you apply Paul's answer to your own life?
5. In the story of the Transfiguration in the Gospel reading, Jesus shows forth his divine glory, foreshadowing his Resurrection. In response to the "terrified" reply of Peter, the reassuring voice of the Father is heard saying: "This is my beloved Son, listen to him." During Lent, how can we take more seriously these words of the Father, which are also meant for us?
6. The meditation ends with these words: "We are all works in progress. We all have our flaws. But we are also being 'transfigured' day after day. So accept Jesus' invitation. Follow him, and you'll be changed 'from glory to glory' as your faith continues to grow (2 Corinthians 3:18)." What do these words mean to you? In what ways do you believe, as described in 2 Corinthians 3:18, that you are being "transformed" more and more into the image of Jesus?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to say yes to his will and to know and experience his transforming power. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmus.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee's website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org