

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

**2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT**

Cycle B - February 28, 2021



**OPENING PRAYER**

Guide: *Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.*

All: **Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God, my savior.**

Leader: Remember that your compassion, O Lord, and your love are from old.

All: **In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.**

**Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

**FIRST READING** [Genesis 22 (1-2), (9-13), (15-18) ]

***God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am!" he replied. Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you." When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the Lord's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Here I am!" he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son. Again the Lord's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said: "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing — all this because you obeyed my command."***

The episode in this reading is well known to most people. In it we may discover two lessons. The first, on the part of God, who reveals himself as a God of love, who abhors the sacrifice of human victims. With this scene, it is defined what in this regard is thought and practiced in the religions of the "God of Abraham" (Judaism, Islam and Christianity). The dignity of the human being is above any matter.

The second lesson we learn from Abraham. The enormous faith of that man is undeniable. He's time and time again presented in the Holy Scriptures as a man obedient and faithful to God, although his demands seem a little (or a lot!) eccentric at times. Abraham's trust in God is tested to the maximum extent imaginable. God is impossible to be understood, the human mind cannot encompass the entire immensity of God's thought, and it only has two options: Either to reject it, or to dive blindly, confidently, into that immense and unknown sea that is God's love. He who acts in this way discovers that God is not capricious nor does want to endanger our integrity; on the contrary, He offers a treasure of infinite mercy, without limits or restrictions, for all those who trust him.

Like Abraham, we are called to silently welcome God's will, beyond all logic, and put it into practice with all its consequences.



- (1) Read Hebrews 11 (8-19). Compare with this reading. Reflect and discuss.
- (2) Read Genesis 15 (5-6). When Abraham had not seen that promise come true, and he has only one son, he goes out to obey God. How close is your trust in God to that of Abraham? How would you rate it from 1 to 10?
- (3) Abraham's faith was "a faith against all evidence." Some of us have even called it "blind obedience." Can faith be in contradiction with reason? Can faith be against common sense? In what way can the exercise of reason contribute to enrich our faith?

## SECOND READING [Romans 8 (31b-34)]

### ***Brothers and sisters:***

***If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?***

***Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us, who will condemn? Christ Jesus it is who died—or, rather, was raised—who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.***

Chapter 8 of Paul's Letter to the Romans is a profound reflection that would be well worth reading as a kind of reflection, especially now in the season of Lent. At the end of the chapter we find the fragment that is proclaimed this time. We read a praise to God for all that he has given us through Jesus Christ. In a text that may need to be read several times to understand its rare argument, we find the ideal of authentic Christian hope: "If God is with us, who will be against us?" And he explains that if God has been willing to give us to his own Son, we can know that he will be willing to give us whatever it is .... (As long as it does not stake our salvation).

In the previous chapters Paul has dedicated himself to demonstrating that God has changed us from sinners to righteous, without us having made merits for it. God has considered us righteous without being so, by sheer grace. If so, who can dare to confront Him to accuse those whom He has declared righteous? From the very moment of the sin of Eve and Adam, God carried out his Plan of Salvation that culminates in the incarnation of the Son in the person of Jesus Christ. Everything that Jesus Christ has done has been aimed at saving sinners. For this reason, it is not possible to imagine a God who is waiting for us around the corner to condemn us. Christ is at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us, and in this reality it is not possible to lose hope.

- (1) Read Psalm 118. Compare with this reading, reflect on its content and share with others.
- (2) Can you imagine a love greater than that of someone who is willing to give his life for another? How many times have you stopped to think that you are that "another"?
- (3) If God loves you enough to give Himself for you, how do you handle the situation of people who do not love you?
- (4) Do I firmly believe that "If God is with us, who will be against us?" How could we advise ourselves to avoid that the problems and contradictions of life make us forget this sentence?

## GOSPEL [Mark 9 (2-10)]

***Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them.***

***Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus.***

***Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified.***

***Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.***

***As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.***

The Transfiguration is one of the most important events in the public life of Jesus. The Church commemorates it on a separate solemnity (August 6), and many have dedicated themselves to studying it and drawing multiple conclusions. Here we could stop for hours, drawing lessons and ideas from it, but given the short space, we will limit ourselves to a few essential ideas. First, a simple curious detail, and it is that none of the three apostles present refers to this fact in their later writings. Others will narrate this extraordinary event. On the other hand,

we must explain that the Scriptures were known in Jesus' time as "The Law and the Prophets." And the Scriptures summed up the entire Plan of Salvation that we mentioned above, in the second reading. That is why Moses (Law) and Elijah (Prophet) represent the Old Testament, while Jesus, the New Testament. The old and the new covenant meet harmoniously. Because both are the product of God's initiative, and between them they lead to Him.

The apostles are witnesses of a foretaste of the glory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who chose them on purpose to give them strength of hope in the face of what was already approaching, since it was going to be very difficult to understand how the long-awaited Messiah would die in the way he did, when he had not yet fulfilled the mission of "reestablishing Israel", which was what was expected. The episode takes place on a mountain, which is a theological detail, as it indicates proximity to God. The same cloud also appears that accompanies the Israelite when they left Egypt in the exodus. It is a sign of the presence of God, and the apostles hear the same voice that others heard when the Baptism in the Jordan. God invites you to listen to what Jesus has to say. When suddenly the vision disappears, the apostles are left with Jesus "alone." They have no other way than to blindly trust him and abide by the will of the Father, to listen to his message. It is as if he wanted to have communicated to them that it is enough to listen to Jesus Christ, because he has the true and authentic message; what others had done was simply preparing the way for him. There is no reason to continue waiting for the return of Elijah since Emmanuel, God-with-us has made himself present among them.

The apostles do not yet understand the resurrection, much less can they relate it to the cross. It will be the Holy Spirit, after Pentecost, who will reveal everything they need to complete the puzzle. The apostles will succeed in understanding that to achieve glory it will be necessary to go through the way of the cross, the gift of one's life out of love.

- (1) Read John 14 (23-26). Reflect on what Jesus meant and try to relate it to this reading.
- (2) Try to remember events that the Bible presents to us "on a mountain."
- (3) Peter, James and John needed a blinding light to "see" or understand who Jesus Christ was. Could you share if you have ever experienced the divine in the ordinary things of the world?
- (4) Do you think that there is something in the Church, in the country, in your life, that deserves some adjustment so that the participation of the divine in the lives of men can be appreciated? How can we contribute to the healing and transformation of our wounded society?
- (5) If you had to choose just one of the words or teachings of Jesus that you still do not fully comply with, which would they be?
- (6) If you had to choose just one of the words or teachings of Jesus to bring others closer to God, which would they be?

### CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*