

Homily Second Sunday of Lent

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus. I'm pretty sure that all of us must have gone on picnics, right? When I was a student, we would choose to have our picnics in scenic places, preferably in the mountains, because of their beauty, calmness and serenity. I liked to sit sometimes and listen to the sound of the chirping birds or the sound of the trees rustling in a quiet place.

Definitely in the Old Testament, also, we come across certain mountain experiences of God's presence. When we come to the life of Noah; after 40 days of flood, the ark comes to rest on a mountain called Ararat. They experienced God's presence on that mountain. In the first reading we heard today, Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only son on Mount Moriah, and later in the life of the Israelis, Moses was called and he led the people of Israel. Then he climbed up to Mount Sinai and there he got the Ten Commandments. For 40 days he was with God, speaking face-to-face. And again Moses, just before reaching the Promised Land, goes up the mountain called Nebo, and he sees the place called the Promised Land. The Prophet Elijah goes to Mount Carmel, where he experienced the real God face-to-face. And now today, in the Gospel we just heard, Jesus goes out to Mount Tabor and transfigures there. Finally, Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives and he prays, falling on the ground, submitting his life to his own father, "Lord, if it is your will let this cup pass me by, but not my will, let your will be done." So all these experiences of God's presence we see mostly on the mountains. Even today as we heard in the Gospel, Jesus goes to that high mountain called Tabor and he transfigures himself, because it is there that he communicates with his father, who reveals, "This is my well-beloved son."

We come across five important times in the life of Jesus. They are the baptism, where again the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a dove and the voice comes from his father confirming that, "Here is my well-beloved son, listen to him." And second is the Transfiguration. The third is his own Passion, on the way to Calvary. The fourth is his Resurrection. The fifth is his Ascension. These are the five main important times that we see in the life of Jesus.

But now, coming to the Gospel, Jesus goes up to Mount Tabor and transfigures. What is the necessity of the transfiguration? By transfiguring himself, he communicates to his own disciples that he will be transfiguring himself every day in the Eucharist. He will be substantially present in the white host. That is what he wants to communicate to his own disciples. Perhaps we question why, every time, he takes these three disciples. We know that they were close to Jesus. Peter denied Jesus. The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee comes and asks for a place in the Kingdom for her sons; one on his right and one on his left. But now Jesus tries to bring home this message to them - this is not your way of life. There is much more ahead; much more to be done in your life. He wants them to carry on the mission that is entrusted to him and later on to

them. That is precisely why he tells the disciples at the washing of the feet, "I give you a new commandment, love one another and do this in remembrance of me." And that is the reason why he takes these three disciples to Mount Tabor. They also need to know that Christ is the Messiah and they need to continue his mission.

And now there come another two figures, Moses and Elijah. It's also very important to know that Moses was the person who brought the Mosaic law, the Ten Commandments, to the Israeli people. These Ten Commandments were multiplied into many by the Jewish people. And now Jesus comes as a culmination of these Commandments which are the Mosaic law - the final fulfillment of all these laws and regulations. Elijah was the primary prophet of all the prophets. And now the prophetic ministry comes to an end by the very person of Jesus Christ there on Mount Tabor. And to unify all these laws, the Mosaic law and the prophetic ministry, Jesus comes and tells them now everything comes to its fulfillment by the person of Christ himself. Now again, after seeing all these three people they come across a cloud. A cloud led the people of Israel from the land of Egypt in the presence of God. And again whenever Moses entered into the tent of the tabernacle, the cloud came and overwhelmed Moses and there he saw God face-to-face. And here also by the overshadowing of the cloud the disciples hear the voice of God, "Here is my well-beloved son, listen to Him."

My dear sisters and brothers – That is one part of it. And the other part is that all the disciples feel so comfortable in that place where everything seems to be so ideal. It's nice to be here. Let's make three tents, one for you and another two for Moses and Elijah. Yes, sometimes we feel so comfortable when things go well with us. We try to be settled, we try to be in a position when everything feels so comfortable for us. But still, we need to go beyond feeling comfortable and feeling good in our own situations - it is not enough. Jesus tells us that the Son of Man has to be handed over to the Chief Priest and he is to be killed. Beyond the comfortable life there is something more to be revealed and something more to encounter in our life. And that is how Jesus tries to communicate to the disciples. We need to go down from this comfortable life to the life of the world where we need to encounter the difficulties, the cross, the pain and sufferings. Perhaps in our life, how many of us would have willingly faced all of these problems? Or do we like to run away like St. Peter, saying, "I do not know this man" or "I have no part with this man"? Or do we try to say, "Oh, why all these problems for me?" Do we try to run away from these problems? And it is said that we need to come down from Mount Tabor, seeing the glorious person of Christ, and we need to climb up the mountain of Calvary, the Mount of Love, where the love of God the Father comes through the love of his own son, Jesus, giving his life on the cross, shedding his blood, breaking his own body. We need to sometimes climb up to that Mount Calvary experiencing our own troubles, our own problems. And then only, we can experience that Easter joy. Easter joy of the resurrection. Resurrection in our own life. We need to

transform our own life. Transform from one state to another, not being comfortable in one position, but rather waiting for him even in the difficult times, transformation.

When I was a theology student one of my friends used to come every day for Mass. The first time I met Patrick, I asked, "How do you feel about coming to Mass?" He said he was explaining his own life story, that he was once a person who was very much violent in his behaviors. He found a retreat centre close by, He was asked to go at least once to this retreat centre and he happened to visit the retreat centre and somehow, I don't know what he encountered but he transformed. Transformed his life to be a different person, a different person, not what he was earlier, but someone with goodness, forgiveness, with lots of love in his life. Every day he used to come to the Eucharist celebration, kneel down before the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of the Blessed Mother - praying extra, doing penance for all he had done. Yes, my dear sisters and brothers, once the transformation takes place, then there is transfiguration. A transfiguration of your own different self. That is what Jesus calls us to today by his own Transfiguration; that we need to transfigure ourselves from the worldly ways, to newness. And the season of Lent is for that.

Last week I said we have to travel inwardly, into our own core of ourself, asking, "Who am I, where do I stand, where am I going?" So if we can see inwards and see who we are, then automatically there is a transformation. Once we come across this transformation of our own sinfulness, our encounter with the sacrament of the reconciliation and acknowledging that I am a sinner, then we find ourselves; a new person. A new transfigured person in the person of Jesus Christ. Let us, my dear sisters and brothers, ask this transfigured Jesus, who showed that glory of himself, the glory of the Kingdom of God, to his own disciples. May he also give us this grace that we have the privilege of seeing this transfigured Jesus in our own life and transform ourselves so that we can also become his children.

Let us pray for his grace. Amen