

2021 February 28

Second Sunday of Lent

First: Genesis 22.1-2, 9-13, 15-18, "He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on top of the wood." (9)

The Psalm: 116, "O Lord, I am your servant. You have loosed my bonds." (16)

Second: Romans 8.31b-35, 37, "Who will bring any charge against God's elect?" (33)

The Gospel: Mark 9.2-10, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here!"(5)

Transfiguration and Transformation!

How long Jesus, Peter, James, and John might have stayed on the mountain, a few minutes, days, forty days? No one knows! They were in infinity, in timeless zone. Hence they could not have recognized it at least until they died. And what could have been the time span between Abraham's binding and laying Isaac on the altar and finally drawing the knife to offer his son's life to God in obedience? How many days or months might have elapsed between God's command to sacrifice Isaac, and Abraham taking the son to the mountain? And in between how much trouble he might have taken to hide his feelings from Sarah his wife and Isaac his son? With these questions we need to stay a while with these characters.

In the biblical narratives though they seem to be moments, the reality might have been different. Such time spans are experiential, excruciating, and requiring decisions to move forward, inviting, and forcing us to transform, and to take life-changing decisions. The experiences of Abraham and Jesus at the mountain were moments of life changing transformation. They were ultimate surrender points of obedience to God's command. For Abraham it was death/killing of his son and thereby the burial of his dreams of becoming the father of nations with descendants as many as the stars on the sky or the grains of sand on the seashore. For Jesus it was decision moment and divine assurance to mount on to Calvary.

These decisions were to be made, one by the father of nations and father in faith for all humans, and the other by the Redeemer of the world, who became the only way humans and all creation had for redemption, and life everlasting! For both, they were moments to choose between life and death. Both chose 'life' by surrendering themselves to death. Our reflection on these biblical characters and events should lead us to our life experiences, and to the lessons we learned or failed to learn. We may feel about our experiences that they are too prolonged, painful, and unbearable. We feel so because we do not delve into them deep enough, and do not properly grasp the gravity and intensity of the experience with which these biblical characters endured, and responded to their life challenges.

St. Paul reminds that God has a design for us and he accompanies us always. "*He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?*" (Romans 8.32) It means that God is not likely to take away the pain and suffering from us, as perhaps we wish and pray. In fact, Jesus himself prayed to the Father "*to take away the chalice,*" that is, the cup of suffering from him. The Father heard the prayer but did not take away the cup. He was with Jesus always. That is exactly what he does with us in the moments, days, or years of our suffering. It will be easy for us to endure if we try to make ourselves aware of the invisible presence of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit with us and for us. At the mount it was the Father's presence with and for Jesus.

Fr. George

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

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