



Homily for 3/17/2019

Second Sunday of Lent

Rev. J. David Carter, JCL

*Hiddenness*

The theme that comes out clearly to me in the readings that the Church presents to us in this second Sunday of Lent is 'Hiddenness'.

In the first reading we hear God and Abraham speaking. From the text we understand that this discussion takes place during the daytime because after their conversation, as the sun was setting and it had become dark the Lord appears as a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch to make a covenant with him. So during the day, the Lord asks Abraham to walk out and look up at the sky and count the stars if he can. Besides the Sun itself and perhaps a planet, no stars are visible during the day! But we all know that they are there! The fact that we can't see them doesn't change the fact that they are there. Abraham believes the Lord and it is credited to him as righteousness.

In the Second Reading we hear St. Paul recommend that we live as citizens of heaven even as we sojourn here on earth. Now none of us have ever been to heaven and yet heaven has been placed in our souls at our baptism, as if a treasure has been buried in our being. We are called to be loyal citizens of a city we have never seen.

In the Gospel, we hear about Jesus being Transfigured before Peter, James and John on Mount Tabor. Here the majesty of Jesus' divinity was revealed to them, whereas before and after it was hidden beneath the veil of His Sacred Humanity.

This theme of hiddenness seems to take up where the readings of Ash Wednesday left off - when speaking about Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving, Jesus counsels all to be done in secret, that "your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

If you have ever studied the Liturgy of the Church, often in the more ancient form of the rituals the Our Father is begun and then continued in silence, with each person praying it interiorly in response to this command to go into the inner chamber and pray in secret. The Eucharistic Prayer used to be prayed also in silence by the priest, joined in this hiddenness by the silent participation of faithful who also prayed in the secret of their hearts in union with Christ.

It is very sad that these very reverent practices were thought mere distractions or misunderstood by voyeuristic anti-devotionalists who stripped away the veils in a pseudo-transparency that tragically wasn't matched in the moral realm, as the abuse crises of the Church have constantly reminded us. Instead of the veils that hid us in the wounds of Christ and which extended to modesty in the heart, now there is open and deliberate noise and bareness that has kept us from cultivating the precious gift of faith.

Mother Church was teaching us through these practices to cultivate the silence and stillness of the interior life, that is, the inner life of the soul before God. Lent is a time for us to recover this inner and hidden life before the lord. We are called to subdue the appetites, the gods of our stomach, and attend in stillness and quiet before the Lord who wants to speak to us interiorly.

We are called to enter the cloud of God's presence and not try to build castles to ourselves as Peter thought to do, but rather to be still and abide in His presence. Eucharistic adoration is the main way we Catholic Christians do this. That is the main reason I desire for the doors of this Church to be open during the day. Yes, we have beautiful artwork in stained glass and stations of the cross. Yes, it is a sanctuary from the work-a-day world, but the hidden gem, the main attraction is found in what is most unseen. It is hidden, veiled from our eyes behind the



most beautiful materials we could muster, of bronze and gold. It is accentuated by a simple, but perpetual flame burning red like the sacred heart it signifies. The veil of the Tabernacle is torn open every time the Lamb is made present upon this rock hewn from our mountains and consecrated by our High Priest as another Calvary.

This theme of hiddenness is also made present to us when we approach to receive Him, whom only eyes of faith can see. To those passing by, who do not have the eyes of faith; they see only bread and wine. They might even marvel at human beings bending the knee towards what they can only assume to be an idol and scoff when they see our devotion towards it and the care that we take lest it fall, be dishonored or in any way mistreated. But we know what is hidden behind the veil of accident and image. We know the substance, the presence, by the eye of faith.

This hiddenness of God was captured so well by St. Thomas Aquinas in the hymn that he composed for the feast of Corpus Christi, the *Adoro Te Devote*:

HIDDEN God, devoutly I adore Thee, truly present underneath these veils: all my heart subdues itself before Thee, since it all before Thee faints and fails.

Not to sight, or taste, or touch be credit, hearing only do we trust secure; I believe, for God the Son has said it- Word of truth that ever shall endure.

On the cross was veiled Thy Godhead's splendor, here Thy manhood lies hidden too; unto both alike my faith I render, and, as beseeched the contrite thief, I too.

Though I look not on Thy wounds with Thomas, Thee, my Lord, and Thee, my God, I call: make me more and more believe Thy promise, hope in Thee, and love Thee over all.

O memorial of my Savior dying, Living Bread, that gives life to man; make my soul, its life from Thee supplying, taste Thy sweetness, as on earth it can.

Contemplating, Lord, Thy hidden presence, grant me what I thirst for and implore, in the revelation of Thy essence to behold Thy glory evermore. Amen.

This Lent, I encourage you, seek the Lord in the hiddenness of your heart in prayer. Do it especially in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament by making a visit to the Church. Draw near to Him while He may be found. It is good that we are here.

May Jesus Christ be praised!