

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK

Reflections on Our Transfiguration and Transformation

On this Second Sunday of Lent, Year B, our Bible Readings are Genesis 22:1-2,9a, 10-13, 15-18; Romans 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10 and our Song of Praise is Psalm 116.

The feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord is celebrated on August 6 yearly. For the purposes of Lent, I am writing from the perspective of our transfiguration and transformation. Last week we reflected on the Temptations of Jesus. As we begin to enter the Lenten Season fully, we are called to continue our journey of conversion and repentance. This journey of faith requires sacrifices of different kinds on our part. The word transfigure is to alter appearance of something, otherwise change. It is important to see that our inner alteration is essential for the purposes of inner growth and understanding of Christ's transfiguration. Otherwise, we miss the lesson of the transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of his chosen disciples. The question can be raised: "What can you see when you allow God to transfigure your perspective?"

Lent is one of the seasons for our spiritual transfiguration and transformation. Abraham was called by God and was put to the test. He was very positive from the onset: "Here I am!" was his constant responses. Notice the similarities or juxtaposing of Isaac, his only son, and Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. Both were earmarked for sacrifice. Isaac was as good as dead, but for the angel of the Lord that intervened for him. When Abraham obeyed and did God's will, he was transformed by that experience, (cf. Gen. 22). To his amazements, he saw that he did not actually sacrifice Isaac, his son. But he had already sacrificed him in spirit when he obeyed God's command. As the saying goes, "On the mountain, God provides." Isaac was juxtaposed with the ram caught by its horns in the grass. As per Romans 8:31b, God and Abraham did not hesitate to sacrifice their only sons. There is reward for faithfulness. God made promises to Abraham. We now talk about the blessings of Abraham our father in faith. Why? Ponder on that for a while! What about Isaac, what happened to him too? Isaac wondered about the lamb of sacrifice. It was as if his person was compromised, not considered. But God took care of him, anyway! How do you think Isaac reacted afterwards in his relationship with his father after that experience? How do you react towards your parents regarding awful experience, a family quarrel? In our world, there are many Isaacs and Abrahams, inferiors and superiors. When superiors use their subjects (inferiors) to climb to greater heights, they must not trash those who helped in their elevation to greater heights.

We live in a world of surprises. In fact, our God is a God of surprises. God indeed surprised Abraham for his faithfulness, and provided the lamb which prefigured his only begotten Son, Christ. Have you ever wondered who left the lamb on that mountain? God always knows what to do, his plans for us, before he asks us for something. Remember the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well with Christ, whom Jesus asked for a drink, (cf. Jn 4). God wants your obedience or cooperation when he asks you for something.

The Lord Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up the mountain of transfiguration. In their presence Jesus was transfigured, and the disciples saw heaven and Moses and Elijah in heaven. That experience transformed the disciples, and Peter cried out: "Rabbi, it is good that we are here!" God the Father spoke to them and introduced Jesus as his beloved Son, and charged them to listen to him, (cf. Mk 9:2-10). That transfiguration experience equipped them for the passion and death of Christ in expiation for the sins of the whole world. What experiences help you to achieve transformation? The Church helps you with the observances of Lent, Stations of the Cross, retreats, revivals, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, fasting and prayer, etc.

God did everything he planned to do to save us from death, from condemnation, from damnation. God knows how terrible it would be for anyone to go to hell, be condemned to hellfire. Therefore, he gave us his own only begotten Son to die for us. It is as if God is begging us to do everything in our power to avoid being condemned into hell after our natural death, which everyone must go through. But after death comes judgment. It is at the judgment that the dead is acquitted or condemned. The question for us as we go through this holy season of Lent is: are we doing everything in our power, everything we know could be done, to avoid sin and evil, so as to be acquitted and avoid condemnation on the judgment day, the day of the Lord? (cf. Is. 26:20-21).