

Homily: February 28, 2021

2nd Sunday of Lent

Genesis 22: 1-2, 10-18; Psalm 116: 10-19; Romans 8: 31-34; Mark 9: 2-10

At times I wonder why life doesn't get easier as it goes along. It seems that at every point in my life where I've accomplished a goal like graduation from high school, acceptance into college, years of formation in the seminary, and finally completing the requirements for ordination to the priesthood, I always thought life would be easier afterward. But today after almost 40 years of parish ministry things don't seem any easier much less any more in control.

It is true our life's journey changes direction that brings new challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities. This is what St. Peter fails to understand while he is with Jesus at the time of the Transfiguration. The Transfiguration of Jesus is a turning point in his ministry, for from the mountain of the Transfiguration he travels to Jerusalem and suffers a humiliating death on the hill of Calvary. But Peter thinks it's all over except the celebrating. He and his companions have heard God affirm Jesus as his own son; in Jesus they witnessed the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies confirmed by the presence of Moses and Elijah; and now are given a glimpse of Jesus' divinity. Peter wants to stay on the mountaintop and celebrate forever. But his suggestion to pitch three tents is met with a deafening silence from Jesus. Peter didn't get it. Jesus' real work is not on the mountaintop but down on the hill of Calvary and it will not be anything but easy or in his control.

The key words of this story are ***"Listen to Him."*** Peter wanted to look at Jesus, to feast his eyes on the beauty and brilliance of this scene. But God the Father speaks from a cloud and says: ***"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."***

We must listen to Jesus and hear the good news of God's reign that he brings. Jesus is truly the word of God---made flesh among us---Jesus is the word to be heard, the word to be understood, the word to be remembered, the word to be believed, the word to be put into practice so that the ***word*** of God becomes the ***work*** of God.

God speaks to us whenever the scriptures are read in our sacramental celebrations. When we gather on Sunday's we do so not only to talk to God in common prayer...but more importantly to let God talk to us, to allow God to get a word in edgewise as it were, a word that will open our hearts for healing, for forgiveness, for reconciliation and peace.

It is important to appreciate that our relationship with God does not stop here in the church building, just as the work of Jesus did not stop on the mountaintop. Rather our relationship with God is to be a living working relationship...a work in progress as it were. The work of God done by us in the putting into concrete practice the mission of Jesus laid down for us; feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, carry for the dying the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. As Jesus it puts it: “...**whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**” That is the work of God we are charged to carry out. And that is never easy....nor in our control.

Listening to the Lord is not easy because we are bombarded by so much noise; so many words clutter our days that we have grown accustomed to letting even God's words go in one ear and out the other. But God's words are meant to go in both ears and then plunge into our hearts and rattle around so that slowly but surely those words change our heart and our ways.

Making an earnest effort to listen each day to God speaking to your through the scriptures, in private prayer, or in silent meditation will change your life...it will not easy...and God will be in control, but it will cause you to undergo a *transfiguration* of your own by recognizing the presence of Christ within you, and making Christ known through doing God work. If you read, meditate, and embrace God's Word this Lent it will be the most fruitful Lent in your life...not the easiest...just the most fruitful.

Fr. Bill