



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

March 1, 2015

Second Sunday of Lent

Gospel reading Mark 9:2-10 *[To be read aloud]*

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

Brief commentary:

In this second Sunday of Lent the Church turns our gaze toward the great outpouring of the Father’s love for all humanity, the offering of his Son in whom God loves us boundlessly. Lent is a journey toward the Paschal Mystery of the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Key Old Testament texts help us to envision this mystery as part of God’s eternal plan. In the first reading we read about Abraham’s total devotion to God: Abraham had renounced his past and journeyed in faith toward the land of promise; now, on the mount in the land Moriah, he is willing to renounce his future, placing his trust in God’s faithfulness and love. However, it was to be a sacrifice of the heart, not of Isaac; and he is rewarded with a future of countless descendants. Reread by Christians in the light of Jesus’ self-donation, who accepted death on a cross in obedience to God’s providential will, the story of Abraham and Isaac anticipates the great mystery of Jesus’ sacrifice on the mount of Golgotha. The psalm also anticipates the “death of God’s faithful,” who is “the servant of God and the son of God’s handmaid”: he will “offer God a sacrifice,” and God will “loose his bonds.” Paul, exuberant over God’s boundless love, expresses certainty that God will be sure to bless us in all ways, since he has already blessed us in the most supreme manner, by offering the ‘Gift that contains every gift’, his Son. We can have unreserved total confidence that God will withhold no good thing beneficial to us: we can fully trust in God’s supreme love. We can also give the total gift of ourselves – of our total love – to God, unreservedly. In the gospel reading we are again atop a mountain. As Abraham brought Isaac to a mount to offer him to God, now – atop a mountain (a place of revelation) – the Father reveals the deepest identity of Jesus to Peter, James and John: “This is my beloved Son.” Transfigured before them, his unique divine life is unveiled. It is God – not Abraham, not man – who can provide the offering that will make us whole, that will reconcile humanity to God and to itself, and that will bring true life to the world. God will turn around the human cruelty that will be hurled against Jesus and will make the cross the instrument of the salvation of the world: love will subvert evil with good; the cross will be conquered and transformed; love will triumph. Moses (representing the Torah/the Law) and Elijah (representing the prophets of Israel), alive with God, give witness to savior of whom the scriptures foretold. The cloud of God’s glory, a symbol also of God’s Spirit, envelop the disciples, who are told to “Listen to him.” They are to listen to Jesus, who is the fullness of the Father’s revelation and love. And their experience would only make sense once Jesus is risen from the dead, once God’s love is fully revealed and triumphs – a mystery still yet beyond their comprehension. We too are to bear witness to God’s saving love in our lives, as we too are transfigured daily by God’s grace, and strive to “listen to Jesus” by loving God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves. We descend the mountain of this second Sunday of Lent transfigured to be ever more intrepid disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ in our world in order to transfigure a world profoundly disfigured by sin and evil.

Today’s reading offers significant messages:

- This second Sunday of Lent we are called to reflect deeply on the supreme meaning and significance of the Cross of Jesus Christ.
- Abraham’s spiritual offering, the psalm expressing sacrificial devotion, and Paul’s confidence in God’s boundless love, all attest to the love of God that comes to us in total gift and offering of Christ Jesus.
- The Transfiguration unveiled to the disciples the glory of Christ and his unique dignity as God’s beloved Son. When their faith will be tested on Good Friday, the disciples’ experience on the mountain will aide them to hold fast and not despair. The Transfiguration anticipates the Resurrection.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

- How has God’s faithfulness held me up in the most trying times?
- What does the Cross of Christ mean to me? How is Jesus’ total self-offering the source of the world’s salvation?
- How do I seek to be transfigured this Lent, to live more authentically as a child of God? How can I more resolutely “listen to Jesus” and help to transfigure the world?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 554-56