

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT, C
IN OBEDIENCE WE FIND HIS LOVE

“This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” (Lk. 9: 35)

From the Desert to the Mountain: On this Second Sunday of Lent, we move with Jesus from the desert of Temptation to the mountain of Transfiguration. This is instructive. It reminds us of the fact that the glory of Transfiguration only comes when we can conquer the temptations in the desert (of our bodies). This is an encouragement to us during this season of Lent when we endeavour to conquer the desires that dominate our bodies through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. There is a reward, a victory and glory that awaits us. St. Paul assures us in the Second Reading (Phil. 3: 17: 4: 1) that “Christ will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of His glorious Body” (Phil. 3: 21). May our Lenten sacrifices be so rich in love that they be rewarding experiences in our lives.

The Synoptic Presentations: Every Second Sunday of Lent we read about the Transfiguration of Jesus from one of the synoptic gospels. The Transfiguration narrative as Luke presents is unique. Of the three, only Luke tells us what Jesus went up the mountain to do – He went up the mountain to pray (Lk. 9: 28), he says. He is also the only one who tells us what Moses and Elijah were talking about with Jesus – they were speaking about His passing which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem (Lk. 9: 31). Thirdly, only Luke mentions that the three companions were heavy with sleep during this celestial experience (Lk. 9: 32). These have nothing to do with the veracity of the story. They only point to the fact that one is more attentive to details than the others. And more so these affirm the fact that the Holy Spirit, Who inspired the writers of the Scripture did not impose His knowledge on the ones He inspired.

The Mountain: The “mountain” was a special place in the life of Jesus. It was a place of prayer, a place of special encounter with God and with Himself. We find the expression: “Jesus went up the mountain to pray” many times in the Gospels (Matthew 14: 23; Mark 6: 46; Luke 6: 12; etc). The mountain was crucial in the lives of Moses and Elijah, the two great figures we encounter in the Transfiguration narrative. Moses received the Decalogue from God on Mount Sinai, where he spent forty days fasting and praying as well; Elijah travelled forty days to hear God’s voice in the gentle breeze on Mount Horeb. These events were transformative in both lives. The Season of Lent is our favourable time to journey from the desert of the flesh to the mountain of the spirit through intensive prayers, the discipline of fasting and the generosity of almsgiving. We

can also create our “mountains,” our special places of encounter with God. It could be a small corner in our rooms, where can pray; it could be a small altar with a crucifix, Bible, rosary, candle, etc, where we acknowledge His Presence.

The Transfiguration: This is how St. Luke describes the Transfiguration: “... the aspect of his face was changed, and his clothing became brilliant as lightning” (Lk. 9: 29). This phenomenon was a manifestation and revelation of the glory that was awaiting Jesus after His Passion and Death. The context of the Transfiguration in Luke’s narrative is after Peter’s profession of Jesus as “The Messiah of God” (Lk. 9: 20), and Jesus’ first prediction of His Passion (Lk. 9: 22-27). Thus, the Transfiguration comes as a necessary event to confirm the testimony of Peter and the prediction of Jesus. Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, standing for the prophets, appeared and “were telling Him about His departure that was about to take place in Jerusalem” (Lk. 9: 31). This is a sign of the Old Testament testifying to Christ as the One “spoken about,” and “who was to come,” a sign of unity of God’s revelation through the Old and New Covenants. The same God who spoke to Moses and Elijah on the mountains, also reveals Jesus on the mountain and reveals Himself in Jesus: “This is My Son, My Chosen One, listen to Him” (Lk. 9: 35). The Transfiguration is a Theophany – God’s Self-revelation in His Triune nature. God the Son is physically present; God the Spirit appears in the form of cloud and God the Father speaks. The Transfiguration was important for Jesus to encourage and strengthen Him more for the impending excruciating death He knew as a certainty. It was necessary for His disciples to see, even at a glimpse, the glory that was to come so that they may not lose faith in their Master at the time of His humiliating suffering and death. Remember they were yet to come to terms with His suffering: Peter objected to this twice Matthew (16: 22) and in Mark (8: 32). For us today, it is also important that we remind ourselves that there is glory that awaits us as St. Paul assures us in the Second Reading. God will reward our sacrifices and sufferings, especially when accepted and offered in love for the sake of Christ (Matt. 16: 25).

Two Key Statements: The statements by Peter and God the Father resonate in very peculiar ways with the spirit of the season of Lent. Peter said: “Master, it is good that we are here ...” (Lk. 9: 33) The season of Lent is a time we seek God’s Presence, a time we strive to be with the Lord for strength and grace to overcome our dominant weaknesses; to experience the warmth of His love; and to enjoy the fullness of joy therefrom. The second statement is what God says about Jesus: “This is My Son, My Chosen One, listen to Him” (Lk. 9: 35). There could be nothing as comforting as knowing that we are God’s children – each of

us is personally known, loved, and cared for by God. Let this feeling stay with us to inspire and motivate us as we journey through life. But let us not forget the command: "... listen to Him." What this implies for us is that without obedience we may not have access to this formidable love that only God can and has given to those who love Him. We should take time within the week to appreciate the love of God in our lives; and be thankful. We should also engage in self-enquiry to assess our obedience to Jesus, Who is God's Beloved and Chosen Son.

My dear friends, our journey into Lent had begun. How far have we walked? Did we decide on our Lenten fasts and abstinence? How has it been so far? Keep the drive alive no matter what has been. If you are doing well, keep it up. If you have failed in some ways, do not be discouraged, you can always begin anew. Remember, what matters is not the fall but failing to rise when we have fallen. On His way to Calvary, our Lord fell thrice. It is permissible to fall even more times, so long as we can rise and keep striving for the best. Let the Transfiguration of our Lord renew our hope and rekindle our confidence in the love and mercy of God.