

25<sup>th</sup> February 2018 (Second Sunday in Lent, Year B)

Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18; Psalm 115(116):10,15-19; Romans 8:31-34; Mark 9:2-10.

**Let us build three tents.**

After the wilderness, this week we are invited to climb up a high mountain and share in a mystical experience that will help us understand better who Jesus really is.

In the language of the Old Testament, high mountains are places where one can experience God (the air is thin on the mountain). We see this especially with Moses and Elijah, both of whom had an encounter with God on the mountain. We are invited to join Peter, James and John who are led up a high mountain by Jesus. On this mountain, for an instant, we are allowed to see beyond the physical into the divine. (At the passion of Jesus, Mark (15:38) tells us that the curtain of the temple, separating the divine from us, was torn into two, from top to bottom! There too the human and the divine meet.) Jesus' clothes become dazzlingly white, almost as if they were light itself, and Elijah and Moses appeared talking to him. Elijah and Moses in their day had a personal encounter with God, and here they are once again talking to God! Also they did not die a natural death, but were somehow assumed into heaven.

As we start our Lent we are invited to reflect on this mystical experience. We know we are sinners and we are invited to turn back to God and listen to the good news. In the coming weeks we will reflect on Jesus who is given up to death, and the question we need to ask is: 'who is this Jesus?' This gospel today gives us a foretaste of Jesus' true nature. Hidden underneath the human wrappings of the man from Nazareth, is God himself. The Father himself proclaims: 'this is my son the beloved!'

Peter wants to build three tents, not for the three disciples, but for Jesus, Elijah and Moses; he wants to extend this astonishing scene. Perhaps he wants to capture this experience – even perhaps capture God himself – so that he could return to it any time he wanted. Mark excuses Peter, telling us that Peter was so overwhelmed by the whole experience that he did not know what to say. Yet perhaps Peter had a good idea; how can we hold on to this experience and continuously remind ourselves that Jesus is the Son of God? How can we continuously live within this reality?

Peter, James and John could not stay on the mountain forever, but had to go down to the lower level of daily life. As much as we try to hang on to our beautiful experiences of God we are soon reminded that reality is much different. We have our pain, our struggles, our misunderstandings. Even in the first reading we hear the story of Abraham who was ordered by God to sacrifice Isaac his son; I can almost hear Abraham look back and ask: 'are you for real?'

Lent is one of the times when we are invited to remember who Jesus really is. We are invited to turn back to God and start again (Pope Francis tells us to press the 'reset' button!) We can actually hold on to this scene if we obey the Father's voice and listen to what the Son has to tell us. This is a good time to listen to God's word in our life and re-commit ourselves to it. 'Repent and believe in the good news,' Jesus told us last week!

Fr Mario