

8<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent, Year A)

Genesis 12:1-4; Psalm 32(33):4-5,18-20,22; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Matthew 17:1-9.

***'Do not be afraid.'***

Lent is a time when we are invited to a change of heart, a transformation, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Our transformation is a mystery; how can we set aside our daily struggles and focus our life on Christ? Jesus Christ is a mystery; what does it actually mean for God to become human and live among us, women and men? Jesus' death and resurrection is a mystery; we have never experienced anyone die and rise again, in the same body but different. The apostles experienced this and they invite us to believe in this mystery.

The gospel of the transfiguration of Jesus is another mystery. Many ask: what really happened on the mountain? Matthew himself is not so sure. He tells us that Jesus said to his apostles: do not tell anyone about this *'vision.'*

Today's gospel reading is heavily laden with images that express the presence of God. The event happened on a *'high mountain,'* the apostles were covered with a *'bright cloud'* and a *'shadow,'* while a *'voice'* was heard from heaven. Clearly this was an extraordinary event orchestrated by God. The presence of Moses and Elijah, two figures from the Old Testament representing the Law and the Prophets, and who themselves had their moment with God, further emphasises the divine participation in this scene.

Jesus' face shone like the sun and his clothes were as white as the light. In the book of Exodus we are told that when Moses came down from the mountain, where he had been in the presence of God, the skin of his face shone, and the people could no longer look at him in the face; he had to cover his face. Jesus is God himself. His face does not simply reflect God's glory, but is like the sun, radiating light; his whole body radiates light! This description of Jesus emphasises that Jesus is God himself in human form. At the moment of the transfiguration, the three disciples experience the glory of God in Jesus. This reality is further confirmed by the *'voice'* from heaven: *'This is my son the beloved!'*

Reading the gospel of the transfiguration in our Lenten journey is a very important moment. We are invited to reflect on our own transfiguration. At our Baptism, which we renew at Easter, we too are transformed. The life of God within us is renewed and we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, we too radiate God's presence. We are children of God, beloved by the Father. Our bodies do not visibly radiate the light, like Jesus does, but they do shine each time we are filled with God's love and reach out to people around us.

Lent is a time when we are especially reminded of the need to fast (empty ourselves) and to fill ourselves with God's presence (prayer) and acts of charity (love). Prayer is the moment we come, in a special way, face to face with God. When we empty ourselves and find time to sit, in silence, in the presence of God, we too are on our holy mountain. The gospel narrative tells us that the apostles were filled with awe (fear of God) when they experienced God's presence. We too need to learn to be filled with this divine awe each time we find ourselves in God's presence.

When we reach out to those around us in love, we are covered with the shadow of the divine and we radiate his being. Pope Francis reminds us that the best way to see the face of God is in the poor and the needy on our streets. Each time we reach out to them in love, we too shine with God's presence in us.

As we journey towards Easter, how can I continue to be transfigured; living in awe of the God within me and in the poor and needy around me? How can I continue to be an image of God and let God's light shine through me?

.... Mario mssp