

17<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (Second Sunday in Lent, Year C)

Genesis 15:5-12,17-18; Psalm 26(27):1,7-9,13-14; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28-36.

### **Listen to him!**

On this second Sunday in Lent, we are invited to reflect on this somewhat strange narrative of the transfiguration of Jesus; in the presence of three of his disciples, Jesus is changed! The three disciples decide not to say anything to anyone about this event, before Jesus is risen from the death!

Two very important aspects of Jesus – and hence of ourselves – are placed side by side in this episode. Immediately before this incident, Jesus has just told his disciples that he will have to suffer, die and then rise again (Luke 9:21-27). Do the disciples understand this piece of instruction? Most probably not! We know from parallel texts in the other gospels, that Peter tries to stop Jesus at this point, but Jesus rebukes him telling Peter to get behind him!

Thinking about the passion and death he had to suffer, was probably very difficult for the human Jesus. Like us he was afraid of suffering and death; we can see this very clearly in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus asks God take the cup of suffering away from him! Within this context Jesus goes up the mountain where he can be alone to pray and seek the Father's support. Like at the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus takes with him Peter, James and John.

On the mountain we see Jesus at his most human and also as divine; on the mountain his whole being is changed and he becomes translucent, showing the disciples, that he is indeed God himself. Today's episode on the mountain is an important moment reassuring Jesus that the Father is indeed with him at this difficult moment.

Moses and Elijah, two of the great personages from the Old Testament, appear and talk to Jesus about his passion, death and resurrection. Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah are talking to Jesus about his passing – the original Greek word used is *exodos* – linking Jesus' experience to the exodus experience of the people of God. The Jews in the Old Testament are freed from slavery under the Egyptians to new life in the promised land; Jesus' death and resurrection frees us from slavery of sin to new life in God!

Peter, awestruck by this whole divine experience, suggests constructing three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. He would much rather stay in this heavenly experience than climb back down the mountain and participate in the passion and death of his Messiah! Luke kindly tells us that yet once again, Peter is struggling to understand the whole concept. This is when the voice of the Father booms out telling us to listen to what Jesus has to say!

Today's gospel is very topical for us as Body of Christ in Australia, today. Like the disciples, we too do not understand the ways of the Lord; like them we try to run away from the pain that we have to face. Jesus warns us that to follow him, we need to take up our cross, every day!

In our life, both individually and as a community, we often come across very difficult and painful moments, they are our moments of the cross. The Jesus story tells us that it is only through pain, suffering and death that we gain the final glory. In last week's gospel, in the wilderness Jesus was tempted to side-step the painful way to salvation and quickly attain his glory, but he refused that temptation to follow the Father's will.

In our life, while we need to appreciate the moments of transfiguration that we are given, these are often very brief. Like Peter we would very much love to hang on to these glorious moments, but our call is to carry the cross. The question we need to reflect upon today and in the coming weeks and months is how best to live the present painful moments, as we humbly await Christ's glorious coming. It is only through the humility of Bethlehem and the Golgotha that we can get to the final resurrection. The glorious triumph of the Body of Christ is not here on earth, but in heaven!

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