

Mark 9:2-10 (Transfiguration)

Introduction to the Mass

God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son. To offer one's own child to God is equal to offering oneself to God. And God was pleased with the inner disposition of Abraham. God was pleased with the disposition of his heart. The selfless love of Abraham, who is ready to sacrifice his only son to God can be drawn as a parallel to God's love for humanity in offering his only Son to save the world! Giving our heart to the Lord, not your Lenten fasting- and thanking God for sparing his son- lets us celebrate that unconditional love at this Mass!

Homily

There is a mysterious story in the book of 2 Kings that can help us understand what is going on in the transfiguration. Israel was at war with Aram, and Elisha the man of God was using his unusual prophetic powers to reveal the strategic plans of the Aramean army to the Israelites. Therefore whatever plans they have against Israel is failing. At first the King of Aram thought that one of his officers was playing the spy but when he learnt the truth about Prophet Elisha, he dispatched troops to go and capture Elisha who was residing in Dothan. The Aramean troops moved in under cover of darkness and surrounded the city. In the morning Elisha's servant was the first to discover that they were trapped in and feared for his master's safety. He ran to Elisha and said, "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" The prophet answered, "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." But who would believe that, when the surrounding mountainside was covered with advancing enemy troops? So Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes

so he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:8-23). This vision was all that Elisha’s disciple needed to reassure him. At the end of the day, not only was the prophet of God safe but the invading army was totally humiliated.

The Transfiguration of Jesus happened during his public ministry when Jesus was pretty much in the same situation as Elisha. His opponents were closing in on him and his disciples, like the servant of Elisha, were very afraid and anxious for their master’s safety. Just before the Transfiguration Jesus told his disciples about the forth coming tragic death in Calvary. But Peter was not ready for this. He protested visibly; he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!” Jesus sharply corrected him, telling him that he was seeing things from a purely human point of view. He needed, like Elisha’s servant, a vision from God’s point of view, to see that in spite of the death sentence hanging over the head of Jesus, God was still with him, God was still in control of events, God would see to it that in the end Jesus would triumph over his enemies as Elisha did. What Peter and his fellow disciples needed was for God to open their eyes and give them a glimpse of God’s abiding presence with their master Jesus. The transfiguration was that experience.

The Transfiguration experience was, therefore, God’s way of delivering the disciples from a crisis of faith. Through this incident Jesus helped his disciples to see things from God’s own perspective by enlightening their vision. so that, at least for a moment, they could see from God’s own perspective. Seen from below, in ordinary human light, people, things and events around us may look dull, scary and repulsive. But seen from above, in the light of divinity, the same people, things and events can be seen in an honorable, dazzling and delightful way. This type glimpse

into the true nature and divine aspect of persons, things and events can be called a transfiguration experience. It is the kind of experience which makes us say with Jacob in the OT, “Surely the Lord is in this place, in this person, or in this situation and I did not know it!” (Genesis 28:16).

Life messages: (1) The transubstantiation in the Holy Mass is the source of our strength: In each Holy Mass, the bread and wine we offer on the altar are changed into the crucified and risen, living body and blood of Jesus. Just as Jesus' Transfiguration strengthened the apostles in their time of trial, each holy Mass should be our source of heavenly strength against temptations, and our renewal during Lent. In addition, our holy Communion with the living Jesus should be the source of our daily “transfiguration,” transforming our minds and hearts so that we may do more good by humble and selfless service to others.

(2) Each time we receive one of the Sacraments, we are transformed: For example, Baptism transforms us into sons and daughters of God and heirs of heaven. Confirmation makes us temples of the Holy Spirit and warriors of God. By the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God brings back the sinner to the path of holiness.

(3) A message of encouragement and hope: In moments of doubt and during our dark moments of despair and hopelessness, the thought of our transformation in Heaven will help us to reach out to God and to listen to His consoling words: "This is my beloved son." Let us offer our Lenten sacrifices to our Lord so that, through these practices of Lent and through the acceptance of our daily crosses, we may become closer to him in his suffering, may share in the carrying of his cross and may finally share the glory of his final “transfiguration,” his Resurrection.

4) We need “mountain-top experiences” in our lives: We share the “mountain-top experience” of Peter, James and John when we spend extra time in prayer during Lent. Fasting for one day will help the body to store up spiritual energy. This

spiritual energy can help us have thoughts that are far higher and nobler than our usual mundane thinking. The hunger we experience puts us more closely in touch with God and makes us more willing to help the hungry. The crosses of our daily lives also can lead us to the glory of transfiguration and resurrection.

5) We need transformation in our Christian lives so that we may seek reconciliation instead of revenge, love our enemies, pray for those who hate us, give to the needy without expecting a reward, refuse to judge others and make friends with those we don't naturally like. This transformation will also enable us to hold back on harsh words and let love rule so that we may seek reconciliation rather than revenge, pray for those who give us a hard time, avoid bad-mouthing those we don't agree with, forgive those who hurt us and love those who hate us.

The three transformations in our lives in our journey towards eternity: The first change begins at Baptism which washes away original sin, transforming us into children of God and heirs of heaven. The second transformation takes place through our victory over the trials and tribulations of life. Every challenge, every difficulty, every moment of suffering, is an opportunity for transformation and spiritual growth. The third transformation takes place at death. Eternal life in heaven, perhaps after a period of further transformation in purgatory, is granted to those who have been found worthy. The last transformation or transfiguration will be completed at the Second Coming when our glorified body is reunited with our soul.