

HOMILY by Fr. Anthony Davis

The Father's voice came from the clouds "...This is beloved Son. Listen to him"

March 17, 2019

2nd Sunday of Lent (Year C)

Gn. 15:5-12, 17-18; Phil 3:17—4:1; Lk 9:28-36

The readings for the 2nd Sunday of Lent highlight Jesus' identity as God's beloved Son (revealed at his baptism and Transfiguration) and confront us with the mystery of Jesus' death on the cross. Hence in order to experience the joy of Easter in this life and to experience of the joy and glory of the Resurrection in the next life, we need to face the Cross head on.

The Church calls this event the "Transfiguration of Christ". Jesus was "transfigured": the figure, the image, the look that he had, the face that showed to others was changed. In short Jesus had a different/new look. Transfigurations are big business today. I don't know anybody who doesn't want one, including me. And many of us work hard and spend a lot of money to get one -- a new face, a new look, a changed appearance.

Remember that in Holy Scripture many people got new names to go with a new life and a new image. Abram became Abraham (Our father of faith). Sarai became Sarah. Jacob became Israel. Saul became Paul through his "Damascus experience". Simon became Peter, "The Rock." Transfigurations are not the exception. They are the rule. We are all being altered in the appearance of our face, our countenance. We are all changing. To live is to be continually transfigured. So who are we becoming? St. Luke's Gospel says that Jesus was praying when it happened. In other words, He did not instantly have it done to himself; it was given to him from above, thus the voice from his Father: **"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him"**.

Story: Perhaps you have heard of the man who wanted to test his wife's hearing. He stood some distance behind her and said, "Honey, can you hear me?" Having received no answer, he moved closer and again whispered, "Honey, can you hear me?" Again, having received no answer he moved right up behind her and softly said, "Honey can you hear me?" She replied, "For the third time, yes!" – In some ways this story could be analogous of our communication with God. We constantly check to see if he is listening in hopes that He will respond to our needs. In reality, He hears us, but He has asked us to listen to Him as well. Thus Lent should be a listening time for each of us. When we learn to listen, our lives become obedient lives.

That is why at the close of the Transfiguration scene described in today's Gospel the three apostles hear the word of God from the cloud, **"This is my beloved Son, listen to him."**

What then did Jesus teach his disciples/us Christians? Ref: (Peter's profession of Faith & Cost of Discipleship) **Luke 9:18-24: "...Who do you say that I am? "...You the Christ, the Son of God..." And Jesus said: "The son of Man must first endure many sufferings, be rejected by the elders, the high priests and the scribes, and be put to death; and then be raised up on the third day..." Then Jesus said to all; "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self,**

take up his cross each day, and follow in my footsteps. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it...

My American Experience: Four years after my ordination to the Priesthood I got the first opportunity to visit the United States, Victoria, Texas, for a summer coverage. During my first shopping with a priest colleague, I was pleasantly surprised at the incredible variety of “Instant Products” available in American grocery stores. I saw powdered milk: you just add water, and you get milk. Then I saw powdered orange juice: you just add water, and you get orange juice. Instant Coffee, just add water. And then I saw “baby powder”, and I thought to myself, “What a great Country. Everything is instant!”

I am just joking, but indeed, we make these assumptions about Christian transformation—that people change instantly at salvation. Some denominations make Christianity so simple: accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, confess your sins to him, you are instantly saved and born again. Some traditions call it repentance and renewal. Some call it Sanctification of the believer. Whatever you call it most traditions expect some quick fix to sin. We go to Church as if we are going to the grocery store to become saved Christians. Just accept Jesus as Lord and Savior or get baptized with water and you become instantly transformed into born-again and saved Christians! Unfortunately, there is no such powder as “Christian powder,” and disciples of Jesus Christ are not instantly born. They are slowly raised and transformed through many trials, suffering, and temptations. Remember, “NO CROSS NO CROWN!!!”

Conclusion: There are three transformations in our lives in our journey towards eternity:

The first transformation in our lives 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. By this I mean that, in moments of doubt and during our dark moments of despair and hopelessness, the thought of our transfiguration in Heaven will help us to reach out to God and to listen to His consoling words: **"This is My beloved Son."**

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. And will be culminated at the Second Coming when our glorified body is reunited with our soul, into Christ.

Let us, therefore, offer our Lenten sacrifices to our Lord, that through these practices of Lent and through the acceptance of our daily crosses we may become closer to him in his suffering and may share in the carrying of his cross so that we may finally share the glory of his Transfiguration.