

2nd Sunday of Lent 2021

Mountains can be both fascinating and daunting. Some people climb them reaching the top and being rewarded with a view which literally takes their breath away, others get lost or trapped and have to be brought down by members of the Mountain rescue team. In the Scriptures mountains are where human beings get insights into the divine, as we heard in today's readings.

However we try to wrap up the story of Abraham taking his beloved son Isaac to sacrifice him on the mountain at Moriah, even though at the last minute, Isaac is reprieved, it leaves us with questions. Do we really want to worship a God who wants a Father to sacrifice his son? Human sacrifice was prevalent at the time and some scripture scholars maintain that the story is told to prove that God wanted to abolish human sacrifice. Even so we are left with questions, not just from the passage but from so much suffering in our own world today. Very often people ask why does God let this happen, perhaps a better question is why do we let it happen, when the 'it' could be violence, injustice, genocide, prejudice, poverty, homelessness and so much more?

In the gospel for the 2nd Sunday of Lent we always have the story of the Transfiguration. Three important words are missing from the beginning of the reading which should have begun '6 days later' Jesus took Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain. By omitting them we are in danger of missing the context. 6 days later refers to the crucial moment in Mark's gospel when Peter responded to Jesus question "who do you say I am" by saying 'You are the Christ'. We know that Peter got the right word but the wrong understanding because when Jesus told him and the others that he would be a suffering Christ they couldn't accept it, and they will only truly accept it when it actually happens.

The transfiguration on the mountain gave Peter, James and John a glimpse into Jesus' future glory, after his death on the cross, at the same time rooting Jesus into the past history of God's people with the appearance of Moses and Elijah representing the Law and the Prophets. A crucial part of Peter, James and John's experience was to hear a voice saying, "This is my Son, the beloved, Listen to him." Unlike at his baptism when the voice from heaven was for Jesus only to hear, this statement was for their benefit, and the order was explicitly 'listen to him'.

So, how do we listen to what God is asking of us, especially when, as in the 1st reading, God seems to be asking too much of us? Listening, like prayer, is not an end in itself, rather it moves us to action, for example, contributing to the local foodbank, addressing homelessness in our own towns and cities, writing to our MP about the situation in Myanmar, Hong Kong, Syria, the Congo, Yemen and many other places where there is untold suffering. The three disciples came down from the mountain transformed and encouraged by what they had heard and seen. Are we ready for a similar transformation as we journey in a positive frame of mind through Lent?

Bidding Prayers for the 2nd Sunday of Lent

Celebrant:

I trusted, even when I said I am sorely afflicted - with these words of today's psalm in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church - that the Church will encourage all its members on their journey of transformation, especially those who are carrying a very heavy cross at this time.

Lord in your mercy

For political leaders - that they will use their power and influence to find solutions to the suffering of so many people, especially in the war torn and poverty stricken countries of our world.

Lord in your mercy

For parents who have suffered the death of a son or daughter through illness, violence or accident - that the hope of life after death and the support of family and friends will help to ease their pain.

Lord in your mercy

For those suffering in body, mind or spirit especially those experiencing dementia and for those who care for them - that they will receive the love and support they need.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, especially all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the COVID pandemic, and Tara Dyson, George Newton, Annie Heap and Gerard Short whose anniversaries occur this week - that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

God our Father, you bid us to listen to your Son, the well-beloved. Nourish our hearts on your word, purify the eyes of our minds, and fill us with joy at the vision of your glory. Through Christ our Lord. Amen