



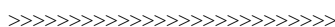
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
February 28th, 2010
GATHERING TIME (10-15 minutes)

Introduction to the Word:

On May 13, 1917, an event with the magnitude of an earthquake appeared to three startled shepherd children near the village of Fatima in Portugal. On a massive cloud that hovered above a very large tree they saw this iridescent image—a *beautiful lady from heaven*. The lady told the children—Lucy, Francisco and Jacinta—to meet her in the same place on the 13th of the month. According to the report written up in the Portuguese newspaper, *O Dia*, on the third such visit a crowd of 50,000 people from around the world had gathered on a wet and dismal day to see the last of three apparitions. This time the lady announced her identity: she was *Our Lady of the Rosary*. Just then something startling happened: the rain suddenly stopped and the sun transformed into a blazing ball of fire. At first it started spinning violently on its axis and then began plunging crazily towards the earth. The crowd was terrified. But just as abruptly the sun reversed its course and returned to its normal position. It then repeated the same maneuver two more times (cf. *O Dia*, May 14, 1917).

How do you suppose you would have reacted if you were a personal witness to such an unbelievable phenomenon? Would you have deemed the sight a miraculous sign of God’s power, or maybe just an illusion of nature created somehow by the sun and the wind and the rain? Fr. John Donahue S.J notes that “...many of us profess faith in the power of God and in the possibility of a demonstration of that power, and yet we are hesitant *to believe* that it might actually happen (2001).” Some fifty thousand people that day were curious enough to want to find out for themselves. They wanted so much *to experience* the divine, just as we do. Yet, if we had actually witnessed His presence, as at Fatima, how many of us would have believed the truth of what we saw?

As we get older, our world gets bigger. So should our ideas about God and about where God might be found, notes John Kavanaugh S.J. (2001). If we are still looking for the real presence only in our Tabernacles or in our sacred liturgies, we are not wrong, we are just missing a lot. God is so generous and so anxious to be with *His own* that every hour of our lives is consecrated, and every event of our lives can be a liturgy (ibid). What all this means is that the meaning of Lent rests upon a dramatic change of mindset from the daily norm; it requires a transfiguration of our minds and hearts. Let's make this Lent a time in which our words and our gestures give evidence that we believe there is *something, someone* for us beyond the stars and the everlasting hills. If it were not so, the significance of Lent would be nothing more than poppycock (ibid).



Warm-up Activity (about 8-10 minutes):

Your small group is invited to talk about your own experiences of visiting sacred shrines.

- i) Identify which you found the most interesting?
- ii) Which disappointed you the most?
- iii) What sacred place or experience has been the most moving of your life?

Table of the Word

“God has chosen to be revealed in the Ordinary”

God is revealed through women and men who live lives of Christian commitment: in those whose integrity strengthens us, in those whose religious sentiments inspire us, in those whose endurance gives us confidence. God is revealed in those who get involved in bettering the lives of others. God’s love is seen in the compassionate; God’s understanding is seen in the patient; God’s mercy is seen in the forgiving. There are many in our midst whose example we would do well to imitate. The plumber or carpenter who take pride in doing a job well, the person who looks in on a neighbor who is ill, the grandparent who is willing to look after the children, the student who is appreciative of the commitment of the teacher. God is revealed in very ordinary ways and yet few of us open our eyes to see.

Penitential Rite

Leader: My friends, today we are invited to see as God sees. In our readings we will hear about God’s covenant with Abraham, the father in faith of Jews, Christians and Muslims. St. Paul will remind us again that our search for our true home begins here in the ordinariness of our lives.

Lord Jesus, you are the new covenant of God’s goodness,

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, by your cross you opened our way to glory,

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the chosen Son of God and our brother,

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray

(together)

*It is good for us to be here! Let us listen to your Son, your Chosen One,
so that we may have a share in Christ’s transfigured glory when he will make all things subject to
himself. We ask this in Jesus’ name, whom you raised from the dead and
who lives with you forever.*

Amen.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME (45 minutes)

(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering Word, and that God is present in the Word proclaimed. This is the Word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the Small Christian Community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this Word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God’s Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)

FIRST READING (Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18)

The Lord brought Abram outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then the Lord said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And Abram believed the Lord: and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Then the Lord said to Abram, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." But Abram said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"

The Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

Abram brought the Lord all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (Philippians 3:17–4:1)

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm, my beloved, in the Lord in this way.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Luke 9:28–36)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, Lord.**

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to Jesus. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and his companions were weighted down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

Just as Moses and Elijah were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Peter did not know what he was saying.

While Peter was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

And the disciples kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

(Allow 5-10 minutes for quiet and for a brief reflection
on a meaningful word or thought)

COMMENTARY:

What does your God look like? I remember being asked to draw pictures of God in early grade school. My ideas were not very original: Jesus on the cross, a shepherd holding a sheep, a hand reaching down through clouds, a king on the throne. If God had other faces, I didn't know about them when I was 10 years old.

If today someone asked me to identify the faces of Jesus I know what I would draw. Mother's face. A loaf of bread. Children at play. Peacemakers. The Red Cross. The Salvation Army. The Grand Canyon. The thousands of helpers and healers in Haiti. I would keep on drawing until I ran out of paper. And even then I would know that I had barely scratched the surface of what God looks like. As we get older so should our ideas about God become more clear for us. This is the important message that Paul is trying to communicate to his Christian community in Philippi.

As we get older and wiser with years of experience, our world gets bigger. So should our ideas about God and where God might be found. If we are still looking for the real presence only in our Churches and in our sacred liturgies we are missing out on a lot. God is so generous that every hour is sacred and every event of our lives can be a prayer experience, suggests Alice Camille. (2010).

What a wake-up call Luke gives us in today's Gospel. Jesus had just stepped aside to pray, a practice that was part of his routine. His three best friends went with him and as they often did when Jesus was praying, they fell asleep. They had just climbed a steep mountain and they were very tired.

Meanwhile *Transfiguration* was happening and Peter and James and John almost slept through it. They awakened in time to see Jesus shining like the sun, along with the greatest saints of the Hebrew tradition, Moses and Elijah, talking about the final fulfillment of God's promises. Another five minutes of sleep and the whole event might have passed by.

Luke wants his readers to understand that the happenings during Jesus' Transfiguration represent a metaphor for our lives. The world is being transfigured by God's grace every moment, and many of us sleep through most of it, like sleepy Peter, James and John. We seem to have a million excusing reasons to justify our lack of attention. But the sad fact is that our lives preoccupy us and put us to sleep while glory shines out and reveals God's presence day after day right in our midst (God's Word is Alive, Alice Camille, 1998).

Our Lenten lesson today requires that we trust deeply that there is Someone for us, beyond the stars and the everlasting hills. Lent reminds us that we tend to settle for too little; we expect too little of ourselves and of our God. So as we reflect and pray today let us ask God for *Resurrection eyes*—to see ourselves and all God's people as He sees us—sinners all, yet destined for glory. This discovery and accompanying joy is ours for the believing!!!

Allow about 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **Commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight or an idea newly described.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. (Genesis) "*To your descendents I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates.*"
 - a. Does anything really belong to us, or are we just "renting" our spot in this universe? What are your views?
 - b. We take so much of the wonder and mystery of this continually expanding universe for granted, and this is our loss. If you had power to put *damage control* on any one part of our world that is being threatened or destroyed, what part would that be and what would you advise be done about it?

2. (Luke) *“A cloud came and overshadowed them. Then from out of the cloud came a voice: ‘This is my Son my Chosen; listen to him.’*
 - a) Where and when are you most awake to God’s presence in your life?
 - b) When have you had a “near occasion of God” in your life? What did you learn?
 - c) Was there ever a time in your life when you felt you should have been chosen for something or other, but were passed over? Comment on your experience.

3. (Luke) *“...and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.”*

“Be not afraid” is a very popular hymn because all of us have experienced the discomfort and pain of fear. Yet fear is real, and is part of life.

 - a. Do you think Jesus felt real fear when faced with his own suffering and death? What evidence do we have?
 - b. What would you consider to be the most frightening task that could ever be asked of you: By your boss? By your spouse? By your God?

4. What do you suppose is the better mode of behavior: to try to live your life with a constant focus on your promised “heavenly reward” or to live your life with a focus on “the heavenly dimensions” of being fully human? Share your thoughts.

CARING-PRAYING TIME: (15-20 minutes)

(This time is reserved for quiet prayer as well as for an action-response to the communal reflections. The intent is to ‘outreach’ to the larger community. The facilitator should allow for a moderate pause between each of the numbered suggestions for reflection and action.)

1. Word for the Week:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation.”

2. Suggestion for the week: Something to think about during this Lenten week:

- i. Peter meant well in offering to build three tents, but this is not exactly what God was expecting of him. The point of Jesus’ epiphany (self-revelation), as the voice from the cloud underscores, is not to honor but to listen. It is easier for all of us to bow down before divinity and offer it a nice place to stay, as in a church. “How much more difficult to allow the word of God a hearing and a place within the fabric of our lives” (Alice Camille, 2001). A challenge: spend some time this week considering Camille’s reflective question.

- ii. How to find out God’s Will: a strategy from Henry Drummond.
 1. Pray
 2. Think.
 3. Talk to wise people.
 4. Do God’s will in small things and the big things will become less troublesome.

3. Intercessions: (Response: **Lord, hear our prayer**)

Leader:

In the name of Jesus, who was transfigured while at prayer, let us pray now for the needs of all.

That the people of God, tested by suffering or burdened by sin, may see, in the transfiguration of Jesus our Master, the pledge of paschal victory, we pray...

That Israel, the land of promise, sacred to Abraham's descendants and to all people of faith, may come forth from the shadows of terror to enjoy a springtime of peace, we pray...

That the despair of those in need may be transfigured into hope by the charity of Christians who have embraced the disciplines of Lent, we pray...

That the elect may listen to the voice of God's chosen One, and be numbered among the descendants promised to Abraham, we pray...

That the sick and homebound of our community may experience the healing power of the Savior transforming them into glory, we pray...

That we may always leave this holy place of worship with new zeal for living according to the example given us by Jesus our Master, we pray...

That by the power of Christ's cross, our beloved departed may come to enjoy the glory of all whose citizenship is in heaven, we pray...

That the suffering people of Haiti will not be quickly forgotten, but rather that their plight will trigger a worldwide response of all the human services required in order for the Haitians to rebuild their lives and their country, we pray to the Lord...

That the people who make their home in the Holy Land – Jews, Muslims and Christians – mindful of a common God and Father – not give up on their quest for justice and peace, but find ways to live life together with mutual acceptance, forgiveness and love, we pray ...

How can we help you in prayer this week?

Let us pray
(together)

*O Lord, great and faithful God,
to those who seek you with a sincere heart you reveal
the splendor of your face: strengthen our faith in the mystery of the cross;
and grant us hearts attuned to discipleship, so that we may follow, as faithful disciples, your
Son, your chosen One, Jesus the Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, God for ever. Amen.*

With hand and hearts united in gratitude for God's favors on us today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we say as one,

OUR FATHER

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