

March 16, 2014 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gospel: Matthew 17: 1 – 8 The Transfiguration

As far as the east is from the west, so far in time is the call of Abram from the transfiguration of Jesus, Son David, **Son** of Abraham.

And as far as the heavens are high above the earth so far are we in time from that Mount Tabor revelation of Jesus' divine glory. What can those events in salvation history millennia ago mean for us as we enter the second week of Lent in the year of grace 2014?

Let's start with Abram, renamed Abraham by God. Actually it starts with God. God had a plan for the salvation of mankind, calling us, as we heard from Paul's letter to Timothy, 'to a holy life ...bestowed on us in Christ Jesus **before time began.**' God chose Abraham, a wandering Aramaean, to be the father of nations, generation after generations, century after centuries down to what Paul called the fullness of time. God made great promises to Abraham: I will make your name great, make you a father of a great nation, a source of blessings to many. But God also asks a big sacrifice: Leave family and homeland and set out on a journey to a place I will show. Trusting that God would go with him, guide him on the journey and keep his promises, it says 'Abraham went as the Lord directed him'.

Fast forward a couple thousand years. When the fullness of time came, God asked his Son to set out on an extraordinary journey that he might become the Savior of that stiff-necked, wayward people with whom he had made a covenant. The prophecies that preceded his coming were somewhat contradictory. Would he become the heir to the throne of David, ruling over a peaceful kingdom with all its boundaries secure and enemies subdued? Or would he become the suffering servant, who, Son though he was, would have to empty himself and take the form of a slave, be born in the likeness of men, accepting even death on a cross. Whatever fate awaited him, he was a Son, who when asked to go work in the vineyard, said 'yes' and went off and did it.

Fast forward two thousand years more. We claim, at least we strive to be, children of Abraham according to mode of Isaac, the child of promise. We claim, at least strive to be, adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, our Savior. To validate those claims requires that we trek along a path, following in the footsteps of the obedient Son. He fulfilled the role of the suffering servant. We need to put on that mind of Christ as we pilgrimage toward the promise of life on high with him in resurrected glory. What that is really going to be like we can hardly imagine. "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him."

What is required of us to complete the journey successfully? In the opening prayer for the Mass we addressed it to the God who commanded – a strong word - "Listen to my beloved Son". We asked that he be pleased to nourish us inwardly with his Word, making our spiritual sight pure. And what for? So that we may rejoice to behold God's glory.

God's Word is effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. If we let it into our minds to penetrate down into our hearts, it has a transforming power to set us free from succumbing to the lies of Satan, from prideful delusions, from fear of death and judgment. God's Spirit can act through the Word to change our stony hearts into fleshly ones, making them compassionate and merciful, patient and humble, like our

Savior's. Word means primarily the inspired scriptures but is also amplified by commentaries, the teachings of the magisterium, the doctors of the church and good spiritual writers. Lent is the season to make time for prospecting in that treasury of heritage for the nuggets of wisdom and everlasting truth they contain.

There is a short section in the Prologue that I think sums up nicely the message from today's collect prayer and scriptures. In it Benedict wrote: **"With our loins girded with faith and the observance of good works, let us set out on his journeys with the guidance of the Gospel, so that we may be worthy to see the one who has called us into his kingdom."**

Firstly it is God's initiative, "the one who has called us into his kingdom", and who asks us to "set out on his journeys." Yes, his journeys, not our journeys, not something we might choose for ourselves. He gives us the destination; namely, the kingdom where we will see the glory of the one who is calling us. The Lenten journey is no tourist's leisurely sightsee. It must be done with loins girded with faith and the observance of good works. So, we should want to be among those called. Faith and good deeds should be our walking sticks, while the guidance of the Gospel shows us the way. That is another way of saying, Listen to my Son.

May this holy season of Lent help us all advance along that trail up the mountains of self-sacrifice, going out of our comfort zones by showing genuine care and concern for the good of others, both temporal and eternal, avoiding Satan's snares, knowing we are under the protection of God's angels. Then we may rightly anticipate the celebration of Easter with joy and spiritual longing. If we make the way for God's grace to move us from darkness of doubt to the light of truth, from vengeance to forgiveness, from anger to reconciliation, from a do-it-yourself attitude to gracious acceptance of God's gift, from pride to humility, we can hope to arrive at the banquet hall of the God's kingdom in his favor.

To the God who has called us, shown us the way, and prepared a destiny beyond compare, to the Holy Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be honor, praise, thanksgiving, obedience, and glory, now and forever. AMEN