

Homily of Second Sunday of Lent of Year A, 2023

Genesis 1-4; Psalm 33:4-5, 18-22; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Matthew 17:1-9

Many things went wrong after the sin of disobedience of Adam and Eve. Cain murdered Abel; there was the flood due to the wickedness of human beings; and the sin of rebellion by the builders of the Tower of Babel. Genesis 6:6 captures the mood at that time, "When the Lord saw how great the wickedness of human beings was on earth, and how every desire that their heart conceived was always nothing but evil, the Lord regretted making human beings on the earth, and his heart was grieved."

God did not give up. He planned to begin a new phase of relationship with human beings. The call of Abram, in the first reading, is the beginning of the new phase of God's relationship with human beings and the beginning of the story of God's Chosen People. God called Abram, who was a pagan to leave his pagan kinsfolks and his pagan father's house to where God would reveal himself to him and make him a great nation. The first reading concludes, "Abram went as the Lord directed him."

As God called Abram to begin a new relationship with human beings, God calls us to begin a new relationship with us despite our past. We are invited to leave behind our sins of disobedience and rebellion that grieve God's heart and follow God's directions.

It is worthy to note that out of the entire people of Ur of the Chaldeans, God called only one man, Abram, to establish a new and great nation. God may be calling anyone of us to something new and great. May we not harden our hearts but respond as Abram did.

Abram was 75 years old when God called him to begin a new journey and a new life. The call of Abram also means that it is never too late to bloom. Seniors who are psychologically young at heart, in mind and spirit have more positive attitude towards life than young people who are old-aged at heart, in mind and in spirit. There is some truth in the saying, "Age is a state of mind." This story may inspire someone:

"Madeline Adams enrolled at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in the 1960's but dropped out to raise a family. After three children and career changes that took her from Missouri to Hawaii to Texas, retirement age had crept up on her. Instead of sitting idle, her children returned the favor and inspired her to finish what she started so many years ago. The nearly 1,000 miles that separated Madeline at her home in Galveston, Texas, to UNO's campus proved not to be an obstacle. UNO's online courses made it easy for her to work toward a bachelor's in criminal justice. In 2020, Madeline, at 80, achieved her goal of earning a degree at the same place her academic journey began about 60 years ago. Her story serves as proof to thousands that it is never too late to finish what you start."

In the Gospel, Jesus took three of his disciples and transfigured before them; "his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light." To transfigure means to transform the appearance of something in order to reveal great beauty or magnificence that is present but hidden. The glorious nature of Jesus revealed at transfiguration had been hidden from the apostles.

God made each of us with great beauty and magnificence. In Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." We are part of that beauty. Psalm 139:13-14 confirms that each one of us is wonderfully and beautifully made. Unfortunately, layers of sin, weaknesses, and ugly experiences hide our wonder and beauty. Therefore, we are invited to transfigure in order that our original beauty and wonder may be revealed. The call to transfigure is a call to conversion and restoration, and a call to a new relationship with God.

Some of the layers that hide our beauty and wonder:

I used to be happy, peaceful, and understanding, but now I am unhappy, angry, and quarrelsome. I used to be prayerful, but now I have little or no interest in praying. I used to be grateful, but now I am ungrateful. I used to be sincere, but now I tell lies. I used to live a good moral life, but now I live a worldly life. I used to be obedient, but now I am disobedient and rebellious. I used to be hard working, but now I am lazy. I used to have self-content, but now I am greedy, envious, and jealous. I used to be friendly, but now I am unfriendly and resentful. I used to be self-restraint, but now I gossip, criticize, and malign. I used to be easygoing, but now I am difficult. I used to be generous, but now I am selfish. I used to be courageous, but now I am very fearful and anxious. And so on.

There are some other layers that hide our beauty and magnificence, and we pray that God intervenes and removes them: layers of ill-health, of hardship, of trials, of crises, and other afflictions. We need transfiguration in our places of work and business, in our plans, in our family, in our associations, in our parish, in our Church, in our country, and so on. Our political and economic leaders need transfiguration. Our world needs transfiguration. May our hidden beauty and magnificence be revealed and restored. Amen.

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