

Homily of Second Sunday of Lent Year C, 2022

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27:7-9, 13-14; Philippians 3:17-41; Luke 9:28-36

In some ancient cultures, including the Aramean culture where Abram belonged, when two parties or individuals made a covenant, they cut an animal into half, arranged the halves on two sides, and the parties or the individuals who made the covenant passed through between the animal parts. This ritual sealed the covenant. Passing through between the animal parts arranged on two sides was a way of swearing that what happened to the animal might happen to anyone who went against the covenant (Jeremiah 34:18). This ritual seems, partly, to be what is described in the first reading. "Abram brought [God] all these, split them in two, placed each half opposite the other...When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking fire pot and flaming torch, which passed between those pieces. It was on that occasion that the Lord made a covenant with Abram..." The smoking fire pot and flaming torch which passed between the animal parts can be said to represent God's divine presence. We can, also, assume that Abram might have passed through between the animal parts before the trance fell upon him.

The first reading is not a study of ancient Aramean's way of making a covenant. It is a reminder of our various covenants with God. For instance, in baptismal covenant, we are initiated as followers of Christ. But many times, we fall short of our baptismal promises: to renounce sin, evil and Satan; and to believe in God, in Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit. We are, therefore, called during the holy season of Lent, to renew our baptismal covenant with God.

Very importantly also, the Lenten season draws us deep into the mystery of Christ's passion and death. Christ's passion and death is beautifully demonstrated by the Stations of the Cross which we are encouraged to attend during the Lenten season. Abram sacrificed animals, but Jesus sacrificed himself. His blood he shed on the cross is of eternal covenant for the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 13:20). It is wonderful to behold heroic sacrifices of people who help others. What sacrifice can I make for the sake of others?

In the gospel, while Jesus was on the mountain and praying, "his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white." In the church building where we are gathered is our own mountain; let us pray for our own transfiguration, that we may also dazzle. May we transfigure in such a way that whatever holds us spiritually or physically from dazzling be removed; and our faces be radiant (Psalm 34:5).

May I invite us to pray this Litany of Transfiguration:

We pray to transfigure from sin to repentance, from weakness to strength, from fear to courage; from bad health to good health, from ugliness to beauty, from disappointment to satisfaction, from failure to success, from sorrow to joy, from disharmony to harmony, from enmity to friendliness, from lack of faith to strong faith, from inactivity to activity, from apathy to action, from condemnation to blessing, from darkness to light, from blindness to sight, from stagnancy to freshness, from dryness to fruitfulness, from emptiness to fullness, from crises to peace, from hate to love, from jealousy to admiration, from unforgiveness to reconciliation, from exclusion to inclusion, from defeat to victory, from shame to honor, from hidden to revealed, from ignorance to knowledge, from poverty to riches, from losing to finding, from destruction to restoration, from anger to calmness, from bondage to freedom, from problem to solution, from injustice to justice, from misfortune to fortune, from despair to confidence, from fall to rise, from danger to safety, from defenseless to protected, from mourning to gladness, from incompleteness to completion, from lies to truth, from foolishness to wisdom, from pride to humility, from disobedience to obedience, from disagreement to agreement, from loss to profit, from decrease to increase, from low to high, from sealed to unsealed, from closed to open, from death to life, from helplessness to miracle.
(You may add your own prayer.)

In today's gospel, "from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my chosen Son; listen to him'" (Luke 9:35). Jesus confirms the transformative power of his words in Matthew 7:24-25, "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock." Jesus also says, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63).

O Lord, may we be listeners and doers of your words. Amen. That is the greatest transfiguration!

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