

Homily of Second Sunday of Lent, Year C, 2025

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 violated the covenant (Jeremiah 34:18-20).

This ritual seems, partly, to be what is described in the first reading. “Abram brought 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 believe that Abram passed through between the animal parts before his trance.

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 reject Satan and to renounce sin; and to believe in God, in Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are called during the holy season of Lent to renew our baptismal covenant with God. The Sacrament of Baptism is the foundation of all other Sacraments.

Very importantly, the Lenten season draws us deep into the mystery of Christ’s passion and death. Christ’s passion and death are 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. He shed his Blood on the cross as an eternal covenant for the forgiveness of our sins (Hebrews 13:20). It is wonderful to behold heroic sacrifices of people who help others or who sacrifice their lives for the sake of others. What sacrifice do I make for the sake of others?

We do not belong to those who St. Paul describes in the second reading as, “Their God is their stomach . . . Their minds are occupied with earthly things” (Philippians 3:19). Jesus says, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19-20). He also says, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (Luke 16:9).

Today’s gospel is about the Transfiguration of Jesus. To transfigure means to transform appearance to reveal hidden beauty. This was what happened to Jesus while he was praying on the mountain; “his face changed in appearance, and his clothing became dazzling white.” The glory and magnificence of Jesus which were hidden from the world were revealed. We pray to transfigure from difficulties, sins, and weaknesses that hide our physical and spiritual beauty so that we may dazzle and reveal God’s beauty in us.

May I invite us to pray this Litany of Transfiguration with me.

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, God speaks from heaven, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him" (Luke 9:35). Jesus confirms the transformative power of his words in John 6:63. He says, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). My we become listeners and doers of his words. That is the greatest transfiguration!

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