

2nd Sunday of Lent (B)

'Climbing Mount Divine'

1st March 2015

Gen 22: Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac Rom 8: *God did not spare His own Son* Mk 9: 2–10: *There in their presence He was transfigured*

It's just 10 days into Lent, but let's remember that it's already a quarter over! So, it's not too soon to be asking ourselves just how our Lent is going. Are we taking Lent seriously, as a real gift of self to God? Or are we still not really decided on our Lenten practices this year?

We hear of two mountains in the readings today: one is Mt Moriah, where Abraham was put to the test (this is the "sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith" that we hear of in the First Eucharistic Prayer); the second is unnamed, but traditionally Mt Tabor, where Jesus was divinely transfigured in the presence of three of His apostles. On each of these mountains, there is a revelation: God makes Himself known. Well, Lent is *our* mountain to be climbed. And that can't be done without determination and effort. To climb a mountain demands setting out on time, pacing oneself, accepting the aches and pains along the way, not giving up half way through! ... all of which we could apply to our keeping of Lent. If we want the real joy and

revelation of Easter, we need to have climbed the mountain ourselves to the top. We need to put in the effort in Lent, so as to rejoice properly once we get to Easter — the joy and exhilaration of Jesus's rising will only come to us if we have followed Him in Lent and through the Passion of Holy Week. Easter will make no spiritual sense — it will not be the 'high' it deserves to be — if we have not made our Lent a time of real spiritual preparation.

So, I challenge you, now, to think how you are keeping Lent so far. If it's not going well, then this is the time, already, on the 2nd Sunday, to do something about it. Don't leave it any later than today! Let's remind ourselves of the programme that the Lord lays before us for Lent.

(i) **PRAYER** — in what way are we giving more time to the Lord? As I said on Ash Wednesday, there's no better way to give time to the Lord than to make it to Holy Mass more often. So I really want to encourage you to think about that, and not dismiss it. If you are someone who doesn't work regular 'office hours,' so to speak, then think of coming to weekday Mass as a special sacrifice for Lent,

giving up a half hour on some day of the week, of a morning, including Saturday. There can be no better prayer to offer than to unite your hearts with the sacrifice of Jesus on the altar at Mass. Have a good think about that.

(ii) **FASTING** — what are we ‘giving up’ for Lent? There can be no more obvious contrast to the feasting of the Easter celebration than to prepare precisely by fasting. We should certainly consider fasting from something, or from several things, in Lent, as a physical statement that we are in a different season of the year, a penitential season. Fasting / giving something up is a committed expression with our bodies that we value the Lord more highly than anything else, than any bodily pleasure, be it food or drink or entertainment. What are you giving up for Lent? Is it a real sacrifice/ And are you keeping to it? Have a good go.

(iii) **ALMSGIVING** — what are we giving to, charitably, this Lent? The third pillar of Lent that Jesus gives the Church to contemplate is that of almsgiving. To what are we going to make a contribution this Lent? Today, for example, we have our Lent CaFOD collection. That’s a very good

cause, our own national Catholic charity for working for poverty relief and development for the world’s poorest communities. But you may have other ways that you intend to give, in Lent. Just check: have you decided on something? Seeing that we have more than enough, by any measure, in this relatively affluent society, should stir us automatically to see that almsgiving is an essential expression of a Christian in Lent. Remember the praise that Jesus quietly heaps on that widow at the Temple, giving her two small coins — she gave generously, for it was all she had. Let’s be generous ourselves, this Lent.

In these three ways — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving — we make the efforts that allow us to climb faithfully and determinedly, this mountain of Lent. No spiritual effort goes unrewarded. If we are generous with the Lord in Lent, then He will reward us with a better and better view of life; just as the view gets better and better as one climbs a mountain. Let’s want to have that new sight, seeing as God sees, life viewed with the divine light that shines from Jesus. This view comes to those who climb the mountain. Let’s put in the effort this Lent, out of a real and deep love for God.