

2nd Sunday of Lent (C)

21st February 2016

‘God’s eye view’

Gen 15: The Covenant with Abraham: descendants, land, rite.

Ps 26: *It is Your face O Lord that I seek*

Phil 3: *copies of His own glorious body* Lk 4: 1–13: the Transfiguration

I’ve just been on retreat for a week to a Benedictine monastery over towards the Welsh border. It’s a monastery I have been visiting, now, for almost 28yrs. I started going there when I was an undergraduate, as our university chaplain was a Benedictine monk of that monastery, and he introduced me into visiting the community. Sadly, that monk and friend has now died, but I still love to visit the peace and prayer of that monastery.

One of the things I used to remember him saying — and he could be very witty — was that he could never understand how it was that the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus seemed to crop up so many times during the course of the Church’s year! Well, he’s right, it does seem to come round quite often — it’s in three of the four Gospels, and so adding up the times it occurs on the Sundays and weekdays, plus the feast of the Transfiguration itself, in early August, plus this 2nd Sunday

of Lent every year ... well, it certainly does seem to be given quite a prominence.

But why today? Why in early Lent? Well, on one level it’s understandable when we think about the apostles: they will have to face up to the horrors of Jesus’s Passion. It shows Christ conscious of their fears, sensitive to the severe trial of faith which His Passion and Crucifixion will be to them. They are in need of this glimpse of His glory, to get them through. It is, as it were, some ‘light at the beginning of the tunnel.’ The Resurrection will be the ‘light at the end of the tunnel.’ In the Transfiguration, they have a foretaste of the Resurrection.

But for *us*, in Lent, this attention to the Transfigured glory of Jesus is also for another reason. I think it’s to take us up ‘on high’ to give us a better view of life, a view lit up by the radiant light of Jesus. Jesus takes us up the mountain, so we can get a good look down upon on our life — as it were, from ‘God’s eye view.’ Ultimately, after all our other Lenten practices (of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving) the most important thing in Lent is then to

make an examination of our lives — an examination of our conscience — and a reconciliation with God through the forgiveness of our sins in confession. By coming up on the mountain with Jesus, we draw nearer to Him, we can take a good view down on our life, and allow the light of Christ, streaming from His glorious and compassionate face, to light up the dark parts of our lives. There are shadows in all our lives, and they will only be lit up properly and brought into the light when the sun of justice shines down on them with its warmth and love.

Lent in this ‘Year of Mercy’ has a very special flavour. Pope Francis has said, “The Season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God’s mercy. How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the weeks of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father!” (*Mis. Vult.* 17).” In a way, the whole theme of ‘mercy’ comes to a fore in Lent, as we ask God for the graces both to be merciful to others, and to seek mercy from God for ourselves.

So, let’s ascend with Jesus this day: let’s take that long look at our life ... let’s ask Him to open our eyes as we look at our life this Lent, so that we can see what things He wants us to ask His help in, what sin he wants us to ask forgiveness for, what habits He wants us to break, what view of our life that God Himself has. Our focus for Lent — our deepest prayer this Lent — should be that Jesus’s radiant divinity shine on us brightly (the light that shone out from Him upon that mountain, proving to Peter, James and John that He was most certainly God). Our time on the mountain with Him, in prayer, is precious time. Our time in Lent is precious, let’s not waste it, but let’s bask in the loving glow of Jesus, and let Him light up our lives, and particularly light up the dark parts, the parts we’re not so proud of, the sins we’re ashamed of. May Jesus enlighten our hearts and minds, that we can make a good and deep, and joyful Confession to Him. He takes us up the mountain this Sunday, early in Lent, and He does so with love and mercy, precisely so He can raise us from our sins, and forgive us; relieve us; and bring us peace and not fear.