

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent (B)

25<sup>th</sup> February 2018

‘Confused ...?’

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*

In the Scriptures, it’s a common feature that to go up on to a mountain is to draw closer to God, and to seek some revelation from Him. Think of Moses on Mt Sinai, receiving the 10 Commandments, or Our Lord teaching the crowds of disciples in His famous ‘Sermon on the Mount.’ But that doesn’t mean to say that every time God speaks to mankind that we immediately comprehend what He has to reveal to us ... sometimes it takes time for God’s message to come to be understood by us. Abraham, called by God to ascend Mt Moriah with Isaac, was surely not totally comprehending of God’s challenging request to sacrifice his son — Abraham responded in faith to God’s command, and of course Isaac was eventually spared, and God Himself provided the sacrificial offering instead. When Peter, James and John are taken up on to Mt Tabor for the awesome spectacle of the Transfiguration, they too are not fully comprehending of just what they are experiencing. Peter

blurts out that they should build three booths ... In his fear, he didn’t know quite what to say. And when the apostles descend from the mountain they are still baffled by the Lord’s words about ‘rising from the dead.’ Yet, Our Lord’s Transfiguration was entirely for their benefit — He didn’t perform that miraculous gesture for Himself ... Like all of Jesus’s words and deeds, this act of Transfiguration was a special gift to the closest three apostles, Peter, James and John. It was to reveal to them a glimpse of His divinity ... Even if on many levels they were baffled by it, and daunted by it, yet they most certainly remembered it. On one of St Peter’s letters, he makes specific reference to this event: “the Sublime Glory itself spoke to Him and said, ‘This is My Son the Beloved; He enjoys My favour.’ We heard this ourselves, spoken from heaven, when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2Pt 1).

I think that the apostles’ experience of Jesus, their coming to understand Him, was a gradual one. Our Lord revealed Himself to them little by little, and yet in a way it is always a huge thing to come to grasp the plan of God, the

meaning of life in Christ, and all that God truly is. God is way beyond us, and yet He makes Himself as understandable to us as He can.

So, what about this, for us, in Lent? Well, I think that one thing we can do in Lent is to “ponder anew, all the Almighty can do” (as the hymn has it). In Lent we have withdrawn into the 40-day wilderness, hopefully with fewer distractions. Last week we thought about what it meant to fast. This week I would like to suggest that Lent should also be a time of deepening the understanding of our faith. Maybe many of us feel that our growth in religious understanding paused when we left a Catholic school, or ceased attending some sort of catechesis or faith formation. This is unfortunate, since, as the apostles show us, growth in faith is long-drawn-out, it is a lifetime’s task. We never stop learning to deepen our understanding of the faith, since God is so deep, infinitely rich in His gifts for humanity, a well that never runs dry. So, we should never stop reflecting on what it means to be a disciple, a faithful follower of Jesus.

In Lent, then, we could each of us benefit from a chance of reading and reflecting on our faith, leading to a deeper relationship with Our Lord. He never stopped teaching the apostles: even at the Last Supper, at length; even from the Cross; even after the Resurrection; even just as He is about to ascend. We should not close our minds to the need to deepen our faith. So, whether using the readings of the Sunday Mass, private reading of the Scripture at home, or use of the wide selection of CTS booklets in the racks — in one way or another we should try to read and reflect on our Catholic faith. If the range of booklets I can fit in the racks doesn’t appeal, then take the initiative to search the huge range of CTS titles available online — search for “CTSbooks.org” ... you’ll find it in a matter of seconds. Plenty of wonderful material for Lenten reading and for a whole lifetime! Let’s not be like the apostles who at first did not understand and just didn’t ask ... let’s pursue our thirst for answers and for a deeper knowledge and love of God; let’s take time in Lent to read, to reflect, and to allow the Lord to give us some answers in the depths of our heart.