

2nd Sunday of Lent (C)

17th March 2019

‘Helping us through Lent’

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

Just as we are taken by Jesus to the wilderness, each year, on the 1st Sunday of Lent; so each year, too, we are taken by Him to the top of a high mountain for the 2nd Sunday of Lent — the mountain of the Transfiguration. On the first Sunday, Jesus mapped out for us the 40 days’ Lenten fast that He asks us to join Him in; and this week He encourages us, for Lent, in a variety of ways atop the mountain.

In order to draw closer to God, we have to make an effort. It’s not going to happen without our devotion and commitment. Just as Our Lord made the 3 apostles climb that mountain — and, I assure you, it’s a steep one! — so in Lent we can’t just backslide and expect Lent to be fruitful. We must take up Lent with gusto, with commitment and effort. Yes, the penance of Lent is meant to be significant, and a proper expression of our desire to be with the Lord.

Then, when they get to the top, they are rewarded with this unexpected encounter with the Lord transfigured.

They were afraid, at first, and bewildered, didn’t know what to say, and probably had to come to terms with what they’d seen over a long period afterwards. But, the fact is, that they had glimpsed something of the Lord in His true, divine, nature. They had seen the Lord shine with a radiance not earthly, but from heaven — a divine glory that hitherto had been hidden from them. Why did the Lord do this? Why did He offer them — just 3 of them — this glimpse of His radiant glory as the Son of God? One may speculate that seeing the light of the transfigured Jesus was what they needed to help them through the dark days ahead — the horrors of seeing their Lord and Master plotted against, arrested, tried falsely, beaten, sentenced by Pilate to death, exposed to the brutality of the Roman soldiers, pressed to carry His own cross on the streets of Jerusalem to Calvary, and there crucified. Surely, the apostles needed a lot of convincing, in their hearts, that their Master was truly the Messiah, when they had to witness His being treated in this way. The light of the transfigured Jesus is just what they needed, the spark that kept alive their hope that all was

indeed fine in Jesus's plan, despite the Passion and Cross. Having seen the divine light shine out from Jesus's person, on the mountain, they knew that even though He was being treated horrifically, He remained in truth the Son of God.

What about us, for Lent? What does this glimpse of Jesus's true radiance mean for us? I think that it lights up our way, too, through Lent: we know that the efforts we are making are worthwhile. We need the Lord to light up our Lent — it is a journey in the light, not in the dark! In a way, this glimpse of the Transfiguration is a sign of the much greater light to come at the end of Lent, at Easter. Here, near the start of Lent, we see the light of a mini-Resurrection ... it keeps us going, it shines and lifts our hearts, as we head through Lent towards the great light to shine out at Easter, as Jesus triumphs over death and hell. So, let's walk this Lenten discipline in the light of Jesus: in the light of the truth of who He is, the one and only Son of God, and towards the glorious life-giving light of Easter. Since Jesus is truly the Son of God, it makes sense to be close to Him. Our whole eternal destiny depends on it!

The other effect of the light shining out from Jesus is that He lights up the dark parts of our lives, the parts we'd rather ignore. As well as His giving us hope and a reason to keep Lent well, He also helps us see the sins we need to confess. This is not a light we need fear; it's a light we should welcome. Lent is not only about maintaining some wholesome disciplines in prayer, fasting and almsgiving. There is the important 4th dimension of Lent, which is seeking the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus's radiant light, shining forth from His holy face is also designed to help us examine our consciences and acknowledge the need for Confession and Forgiveness. We need to make sure that this is a part of our Lent.

As the apostles needed time to reflect quietly on what they had witnessed, so let's also take time at this early point of Lent to weigh up the measure in which we are making an effort to keep Lent well. The Lord is calling us to a mountain-top experience, a real encounter with His divinity, His glory, and His mercy ... Let's embrace this offer He gives us, this Lent, and truly walk with Him in love.