

2nd Sunday Lent (A)

8th March 2020

'Planned Giving wk II: experiencing Jesus's love'

Gen 12: the call of Abraham

2Tim1: *He abolished death ... proclaimed life*

Mt 17: 1–9: the Transfiguration.

I mentioned, when I distributed the slim, pocket, copies of St Matthew's Gospel a few weeks ago, that an ideal time to read through the Gospel, cover to cover, would be this season of Lent. In each copy was a simple day-by-day outline of how to read through the Gospel over the course of 40+ days. There are many advantages of this, to add to your hearing the Word in Mass: one is that you don't miss any of the text that might be skipped in the Sunday lectionary; a second is that you can see how the events fit together: what comes before, what comes after, what is the context of a particular passage. If you notice, Jesus's Transfiguration is in ch. 17. That's a big jump from the chapters we were in from the beginning of the year, including last week (ch. 4, Temptations in the Desert). The context of this unparalleled moment of Jesus's revealing of divine glory is that He has just been proclaimed by St Peter as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Immediately after that, Jesus tells the apostles that He is destined to

suffer, be put to death, and to rise again. It's as if the Lord needs to strengthen the closest three of the apostles, Peter, James & John, in the light of what He has predicted to them. If they're to understand that His Passion and Death is to lead to Resurrection, then presumably they need to know that, deep down, He's truly the Son of God?

Yes — I'm sure that's true, so far as it goes. It's a truly astonishing manifestation (though still only a glimpse) of Jesus's true nature as the living God Himself. And the apostles were amazed by it, and really rather afraid. But the other day I was at Aylesford, and one of the friars giving a Lent talk put a rather different perspective on this event: was it mostly about *knowledge* (extra evidence and facts about Himself given to the apostles?) or was it mostly about *love* (revealing His inner life to them as a source of devotion)? Was the Transfiguration mostly a *lesson to be learnt*, or a *love to be felt*? The two aren't mutually exclusive, but which was uppermost in the mind of Christ? Which was the primary motive in His heart? I suspect that that friar the other day was right — it was mostly about

Jesus's showing love to the apostles. So slow, as they are, to understand what's going on; so slow to take everything in. He wants to them to see and feel His inner life, His love and mercy, streaming out from His divine heart. Yes, they do feel afraid, they do fall to their faces when the cloud and the heavenly Father's voice speaks; but Jesus reassures them, "Do *not* be afraid." He cannot reveal His divine love without, in one sense, overwhelming them. That's surely why it's a momentary event, perhaps lasting just a few minutes. But He wants them to know, above all things, that His love for them, and for the world, is greater than anything — it'll be greater even than the horrific death that He will be subjected to. Let's allow ourselves this Lent to be changed by this knowledge — not the simple, 'facts' knowledge of Jesus's divinity, but by the experienced, felt, inner peace that comes with knowing the true *love* of the Son of God for us. The light of His love, shining more brightly than any earthly darkness, casts away our fears, strengthens us to trust in Him, means we can admit openly to Him our sins, and have the motivation to do real good.