2nd Sunday of Lent, Cycle B

Gen. 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Rom 8: 31b-34/ Mk 9: 2-10

February 24/25, 2018

One of the things psychologists know is that we humans learn things by knowing contrasts and differences. For instance, we know hot because we know cold. We know light because we know darkness. We know what being a man is because we have experienced a woman, and vice versa. Without these differences, we are left confused and frightened of new experiences. “What does this mean?” we will ask.

Peter, James, and John had a unique experience. They had nothing to which compare it at the time. They saw divinity, the glory of Jesus’ divine nature and person. It was, so to speak, “out of this world.” They were terrified, didn’t know what to say.

Jesus, the best of all psychologists, knew that the Apostles were going to have another confusing experience in a very short while at the Crucifixion. Jesus knew they were going to see something incomprehensible and he wanted to give them a contrast, a clarifying experience that they would need to make sense of Good Friday. So, he gave them the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John were to be the pillars of the early Church. They were going to have to support the faith of the other Apostles after Jesus’ crucifixion. They were going to have to have a clear understanding of what it meant for the Son of God to die and rise. They would not be able to comprehend the Cross if they had not seen the Transfiguration.

But at the Transfiguration, they had not yet seen Jesus die. They had not yet experienced the Cross, so what happened? They were terrified, dumbfounded, and questioned what it all meant. Jesus, Know this, told them to keep quiet until they had witnessed the Cross and the Resurrection when they would understand. For the time being, all they could do was ask, “What does rising from the dead mean?”

Resurrection always follows death. Little in life makes sense to us if we do not know both the Cross and the Resurrection.

“What does this mean?”we ask ourselves when we are faced with an experience unknown to us. New experiences can be disorienting, confusing, even if they are pleasant. Watching my first-born coming into the world, I asked, “What will this mean for me, my wife Mary, and for him?” Or my wedding day, life-long vows even though an uncertain future. “Where will this love take us?”

The Apostles came down from the mountain that day with a glimpse of the glory of God and asked, “What does rising from the dead mean?” The glory of the Transfiguration and the suffering of the Cross can be only understood through the eyes of faith. Faith is the foundation upon which the life of the Christian is built. Faith gives us a vision of God. It marks the presence of God – both in life and in death. Whether it is at the foot of the Cross or at the entrance to the empty tomb, whether on Good Friday or on Easter Sunday, faith marks the presence of Go. Faith answers the question, “What does rising from the dead mean?”

Faith gives us a vision of God, a common vision of what we can hope for. A vision of what can be, of what will be, of who we are and who we can become.

We have been redeemed and we will be resurrected, just as Jesus rose from the dead. This was the preaching of Jesus; this was the preaching of the Apostles; this is the constant teaching of the Church.

Jesus knew that the faith of the Apostles had to stay strong for our sakes. He knew that generations of men throughout the centuries would not see the Crucifixion or the Resurrection with their physical eyes, but only with the eyes of faith. He knew that it would be through faith that we would understand the Cross. He knew that it would be through faith that we would understand the Resurrection. Faith marks the presence of God in our suffering and in our glory.

Our lives must be modeled after the life of Jesus. We too will experience, as he did, the Cross and the Resurrection. The Cross is made bearable because we have come to believe in what follows, new life through the Resurrection.

Do not be blind to the presence of God in your life. Do not blind yourself by abandoning your faith. Whether you are now suffering the Cross or rejoicing in a resurrection in some way, God is with you. That is his promise. A promise we can accept in faith.