

MARCH 8, 2020
Sunday of the 2nd Week of Lent
Matthew 17: 1-9

A GLIMPSE OF ETERNAL GLORY

“At the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye, or lost a hand, or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith. No this is not a piece of trivia for you to throw around at your next party. It’s a very real part of our tradition. Those who follow Jesus suffer for their faith. Perhaps this is not the good news you wanted to hear today, but it is very much connected with being a follower of Jesus. During this Lenten season we are asked to reflect on our Saviour’s suffering, death and resurrection. We are asked in some ways to walk with the one who suffered for us.”¹

Today’s gospel speaks about the Transfiguration, the manifestation of Jesus Christ: “His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.”² This is not only a manifestation of His glory but His confrontation with evil. Even if it hurts, the truth is, He must face and confronts a great evil that would happen in Jerusalem in order to arrive at the goal – His Resurrection. And during the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah were at His side to give ‘strength and support.’ Why Moses and Elijah? “Moses had faced the horrible evil of slavery, the reduction of the Israelites to objects who could be used at the pleasure of the Pharaoh. Elijah confronted the Israelites themselves when they began to worship the gods of temple prostitution and child sacrifice.”³ They were one of the best persons who can relate to Jesus and can give encouragement because they too experienced this kind of difficulties and hardships in following the God of Israel.

¹ www.sermoncentral.com/johnvella

² Matthew 17: 2 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

³ www.sermoncentral.com/johnvella

My sisters and brothers, God the Father never leave Jesus Christ throughout His life, especially during His suffering and death. In the gospel we heard that the Father declared Jesus 'my beloved Son.' This is also our assurance that God will never abandon us throughout our lives, we just need to 'listen to Him.'

There is a story happened during the earthquake in "Northwest Armenia on December 7, 1998, a 6.9 magnitude that flattened buildings and killed some 25,000 people. In the muddled chaos a distressed father bolted through the winding streets leading to the school where his son had gone earlier that morning. The man could not stop thinking about the promise he had given his son many times. "No matter what happens, Armand, I'll always be there." He reached the site where his son's school had been but saw only a hill of rubble. He just stood there at first fighting back tears...and then took off stumbling over debris running toward the east corner where he knew his son's classroom had been. With nothing but bare hands he started digging, desperately pulling bricks and pieces of wall plaster. One of the bystanders said, "Forget it, mister, they're all dead." He looked up and replied, "You can criticize me, or you can help lift these bricks" but only a few pitched in, and most of them gave up once their muscles began to ache. But the man couldn't stop thinking about his son, so he kept digging and digging...for hours and hours. 12 hours went by..... 18 hours..... 24 hours..... 36 hours..... and finally into the 38th hour he heard a muffled groan from under a piece of wallboard. The man grabbed the board, pulled it back and cried, "Armand!" and from the darkness came a slight, shaking voice, "Papa?" Other weak voices began calling out as the young survivors stirred beneath the still uncleared rubble. Gasps and shouts of bewildered relief came from the few onlookers and parents who remained. They found 14 of the 33 students still alive. When Armand finally emerged, he tried to help dig until all his surviving classmates were out. Everybody standing there heard him as he turned to his friends and said, "See, I told you my father wouldn't forget us." Dr. Scott Hahn

recounts this story in his wonderful book 'A Father Who Keeps His Promises.' He concludes with this sentence: 'That's the kind of faith we need, because that's the kind of Father we have.'"⁴

The Transfiguration gives a glimpse of the future glory of Jesus' Resurrection and our own resurrection too. This also gives us the encouragement to continue our Lenten observance of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. In everything we do, let us remember, in God, we will be joyful, but like our Master and Lord, we need to endure suffering and even death in order to reach the goal of eternal life. "So when our cross is heavy or when we are tempted to despair about the meaning of life, let us look beyond the pain of the present moment and remember those times when we got glimpses of God, those times when God sent us his consolations. Let us look beyond the pain of life and see the presence of God in our world, and the offer of life that God wants to make to each of us. Let us look beyond the illusion of happiness that this life offers to the real happiness that God offers us. Let us look beyond this world to eternal life with God."⁵ We don't choose suffering, we choose God's will as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.

My sisters and brothers, as we continue disciplining ourselves this Lent, we can follow some practical fasting:

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope
- Fast from worries and trust in God
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful
- Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled

⁴ www.stmaryvalleybloom.org

⁵ frtommylane.com

- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for giving me a glimpse of your glory. May I focus and direct my life to that glory by being faithful to your Word and commandments. Keep me strong and persevere as I carry my crosses and be an instrument to help others to carry their own crosses. May I always see your glory by your Word, action and presence in my life. Amen."