

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Second Sunday of Lent—Year B

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret
Executive Director

www.gratitudefoundation.us
frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us

3713 County 416 20th Road
Gladstone, MI 49837

“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Second Sunday of Lent

Reading 1

Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

God put Abraham to the test.

He called to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am!" he replied.

Then God said:

"Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love,
and go to the land of Moriah.

There you shall offer him up as a holocaust
on a height that I will point out to you."

When they came to the place of which God had told him,
Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it.
Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.
But the LORD's messenger called to him from heaven,
"Abraham, Abraham!"

"Here I am!" he answered.

"Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger.

"Do not do the least thing to him.

I know now how devoted you are to God,
since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son."

As Abraham looked about,
he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket.
So he went and took the ram
and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said:

"I swear by myself, declares the LORD,

that because you acted as you did
in not withholding from me your beloved son,

I will bless you abundantly
and make your descendants as countless
as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore;
your descendants shall take possession
of the gates of their enemies,
and in your descendants all the nations of the earth
shall find blessing—
all this because you obeyed my command."

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19

R. (116:9) **I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

I believed, even when I said,
"I am greatly afflicted."

Precious in the eyes of the LORD
is the death of his faithful ones.

R. **I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

O LORD, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;
you have loosed my bonds.

To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

R. **I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

My vows to the LORD I will pay
in the presence of all his people,
In the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

R. **I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

Reading 2

Rom 8:31b-34

Brothers and sisters:

If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own Son

but handed him over for us all,

how will he not also give us everything else along with him?

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones?

It is God who acquits us, who will condemn?

Christ Jesus it is who died—or, rather, was raised—

who also is at the right hand of God,

who indeed intercedes for us.

Verse Before the Gospel

Cf. Mt 17:5

From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard:

This is my beloved Son, listen to him.

Gospel

Mk 9:2-10

Jesus took Peter, James, and John
and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves.
And he was transfigured before them,
and his clothes became dazzling white,
such as no fuller on earth could bleach them.
Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses,
and they were conversing with Jesus.
Then Peter said to Jesus in reply,
"Rabbi, it is good that we are here!
Let us make three tents:
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."
He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified.
Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them;
from the cloud came a voice,
"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."
Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone
but Jesus alone with them.

As they were coming down from the mountain,
he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone,
except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead.
So they kept the matter to themselves,
questioning what rising from the dead meant.

Exegesis

Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

When a lectionary text is broken into select versus, I find it helpful to look at the entire biblical text. I find that in this case the following verses are particularly significant and gut wrenching: “Abraham took the wood for the holocaust and laid it on his son Isaac’s shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, Isaac spoke to his father Abraham: ‘Father!’ he said, “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the holocaust.?” ‘Son,’ Abraham answered, ‘God himself will provide the sheep for the holocaust.’” (Gn 22: 7-8)

I find the parallel with the Crucifixion of Jesus to be striking, i.e. the call to sacrifice his only son, the carrying of the wood on his shoulders, and the fact that God Himself will provide the lamb. Could Mount Moria be the Hill of Calvary? Moria appears again in 2 Chronicles. It is in Jerusalem, and in particular the location where the temple was later built. “AND Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, in mount Moria, which had been shewn to David his father, in the place which David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And he began to build in the second month, in the fourth year of his reign.” (2 Ch 3:1-2) Whether the location is the location where the temple would be later built and holocaust offered or the adjacent Hill of Calvary, it is a profound foreshadowing of the Cross of Jesus.

Abraham is our father in faith. What incredible faith he must have had to offer his only son. It required a profound trust in God.

Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19

Psalm 116 is referred to as a thanksgiving Psalm. In most bibles it is entitled *Thanksgiving to God who saves from death*. Verse 10 supports the faith of Abraham, i.e. “I kept faith, even when I said, “I am greatly afflicted.” Delivered from death the psalmist proclaims, “I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.” (Ps 116: 17)

Rom 8:31b-34

How can an all-loving God, who is Love itself, allow His only Son to die on the Cross? This is the question that Christians have struggled with over the centuries. How could a God of Love ask Abraham to sacrifice his only son. The bond of love makes two as one. In true authentic love it is more difficult to watch a loved one suffer than to suffer oneself. On the Cross we can make no distinction between the Father and Son, or for that matter the mother looking on. It is love on display for all to see. Could it be any other way?

Exegesis (Continued)

Mk 9:2-10

As in all scripture passages it is important to look at the setting. Just prior to this event that we call the Transfiguration Jesus informed His disciples for the first time of His coming Passion and death, followed by the conditions of discipleship, i.e. dying to self in love.

Now after six days, so on the seventh day, the day of the Lord, Jesus takes his first disciples, Peter, James and John up the mountain. The mountain is a place of theophany. The mountain is place to encounter God, e.g. Mt. Moriah, Mt. Sinai, Jerusalem. Some have called this a Christophany, where the true eternal Jesus is revealed in all His glory.

Jesus is transfigured before them. The word *transfigured* come from the Latin translation *transfiguratus est*. In the original Greek the verb is *metamorphothe*, which implies a change of form. The term is used in Phil. 2:6-11, “who being in the form (*morphe*) of God.”¹ So Jesus was seen in a form beyond that of human. The light flowed out from within Him such that His garments became gleaming as no fuller on earth could achieve.

Moses and Elijah are present representing the Law and the Prophets respectively. Perhaps more significantly these are men that have been dead for hundreds of years and yet there they are conversing with Jesus. It is a glimpse into eternity.

The voice of God comes from the cloud, again a common theme in a theophany. In Exodus 40:34-38 a cloud covers the tent of meeting, which is filled with the glory of the Lord. At the dedication of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem *a cloud filled the house of the Lord* (1 Kgs 8:10-11).² The voice like the voice of God at the Baptism of Jesus, announces My Beloved Son. At the baptism the voice is directed at Jesus, i.e. “You are My Beloved Son.” In the transfiguration scene voice of God is now directed to the disciples and to us, “This is My Beloved Son. Listen to Him.” This little nuance leads me to believe that this theophany was meant for us. God wants us to know what lies ahead. Jesus talked often of the Kingdom of God that is already fulfilled and waits for us and the Kingdom of God here and now still evolving.

1. Sacra Pagina, The Gospel of Mark, Donahue - Harrington, M.G. page 269.

2. Sacra Pagina, The Gospel of Mark, Donahue - Harrington, M.G. page 270.

Reflection

Referring to the current state of our society someone once said, “We are like a people on a journey who have forgotten where we are going.” As I look at our society, I see that very clearly. We tend to be listless, and we easily follow the latest trend. Perhaps it is part of the human condition. Dante wrote centuries ago that life is like waking up in the middle of a forest and not knowing which direction to go or like coming to a fork in the road and not knowing which path to take.

This weekend’s Gospel is Mark’s rendition of the Transfiguration of Jesus. If you look at the setting in the Gospel, Jesus has just told His disciples for the first time that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die and be raised after three days. The disciples were in a state of shock and full of fear and anxiety. Then Jesus takes Peter, James and John up the mountain and He is transfigured before them. Moses and Elijah are there with Him. The risen Lord is there in His transfigured glorified body. Moses and Elijah are alive and recognizable as well. The voice of God is heard, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him.” Jesus and His closest disciples get a glimpse of eternity, of the great beyond. The ultimate destination becomes visible. They see where they are headed.

Peter wants to hold on to the moment. He wants to build three tents for them to stay in the experience. He wants to bond with eternity. Jesus has other plans at the moment. He leads them down the mountain. Even though Easter is before them, Good Friday is in His path. He must come down the mountain. There can be no resurrection without the Cross. It is for this hour that He came. Jesus needs to accomplish the task at hand, but now the ultimate destination is in sight.

Coming down the mountain the disciples question what rising from the dead meant. Two paragraphs before the account of the transfiguration has a heading that in all bibles reads, “The First Prediction of the Passion.” The first sentence is as follows: “He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and rise after three days.” Why is the heading of the paragraph not, “The First Prediction of the Resurrection?”

Often in the Gospels we hear that Jesus’ face is set like flint on Jerusalem, or that He is resolutely journeying to Jerusalem. I always interpreted or understood that as His focus to be on the Cross. Maybe His focus was beyond the Cross and the Cross was just in His path. Perhaps His vision was on the ultimate goal, union with the Father and with us! At the Last Supper He prayed, “Father may they be one as you and I are one.”

Perhaps that should be our focus as well. We are all on a journey and we should keep our ultimate destination in sight. If we do, we have a much better chance of getting there safely. We are all companions on the same journey and we all should have the same destination as our goal. We need to all help each other along the way, especially during this crazy and uncertain time that we are now living in. Jesus is walking with us, this I know. May God bless us on the way.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love.
Amen.

In Jesus, Mother Mary and St. Joseph,



Personal Witness

During my prior life as a Certified Public Accountant I did a fair amount of work-related travel. Several of my clients owned their own private aircraft. Several had licenses to fly but they were not professional pilots by any means, and so I was always a little apprehensive to fly with them. One of those pilots in particular gave me cause to worry.

One day we were flying back to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan from a business meeting in Detroit. There were four stout men cramped into a twin engine four seat Cessna. For some reason I drew the copilot's seat. Being an amateur that he was, the pilot apparently did not check the weather. After being in the air for about 30 minutes he said, "It looks like there is some weather ahead." I could see it on the radar screen and shortly thereafter I could see total darkness ahead and it was early afternoon. We flew into a hailstorm.

Now sitting in the copilot's seat with my knees against the dashboard and my face about 18 inches from the windshield I had a pretty good view of what was coming. Suddenly it was total darkness. The hail hitting the windshield was deafening. It sounded like a machine gun. I felt that the windshield could collapse at any moment. I looked over at the pilot and he was turning white. I discovered that I could pray three complete rosaries in five minutes flat. I think that the worst part of the experience was knowing that we were traveling at 180 miles per hour without being able to see where we were going.

After about 10 or 15 minutes that felt like an eternity, we either flew out of or above the storm. We burst out into a clear blue sky. After total darkness the light was blinding. I looked back at the darkness and never wanted to go through that again. I immediately felt that my prayers were answered, and I thanked God for delivering us from that nightmare.

Whenever I ponder the Transfiguration, I think of that experience. Jesus had just told His disciples that He was journeying to Jerusalem to be crucified. It had to be a dark moment for them. The climb up the mountain must have been particularly long and arduous. But then from the cloud came the voice of God. Jesus was transfigured before them. Moses and Elija, dead for hundreds of years, appear with Him. It is a glimpse into eternity. It is a vision of life beyond the storms of this world. It is life beyond the Cross as the Glorified Risen Lord stands before them.

There was still work to be done and they had to journey with Jesus down the mountain and then up the Hill of Calvary. This experience had to give Jesus and His disciples the courage to go on. Unlike the baptism of Jesus where the voice of the Father is addressing Jesus, God is now speaking to the disciples and to us, "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him." God wants us to know what lies ahead for us as well, if we but remain faithful, and that should give all of us the courage to go on. The inevitable storms of life remain in our path, but the bright light of Easter dawns for us who believe.

Fr Glenn