

Homily  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent  
March 12, 2017

In the Name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, Amen

All of us know people who have retired to warmer climates like Florida or Arizona or California. But none of them moved because God told them to.

In the Old Testament reading this morning, we have Abram—at the age of 75, being told, by the Lord, to do what was unthinkable in his world, to leave country and family behind and go he knew not where.

This was nothing like retirement. It was starting all over again. But he did it, because God made him a promise. The trade-off was this: God would gain a people who would worship him exclusively, and Abraham, still childless at this point, would have more descendants than could ever be counted. God didn't say it would be easy, and in fact it wasn't easy for him or his descendants, down to this very day.

The common theme of today's reading is transformation. The readings

invite us to work with the Holy Spirit to transform our lives by renewing them during Lent.

In the *Genesis* reading, Abraham responds to God's call. His response opened up channels for the redemptive action of God in history. In answering this call, Abraham broke with the experience of his past life and moved into an unmapped future to become a 'people of the Promise' for a new life'.

And in *Romans*, the Apostle Paul tells us that Abraham's actions demonstrate the way to be right with God; he believed in His awesome promises of God. He left his comfortable life, everything behind and in doing so, was transformed.

In today's *Gospel*, we heard the story of the transfiguration of Jesus. Transfiguration means a change of form, metamorphosis. Yet, Jesus does not change into something he was not before and the disciples are not simply spectators but participants in this event.

Rev. Michael Marsh, an Episcopalian Priest from a parish in the Diocese of West Texas, in his homily entitled, *Listen*, says that this story is not only about the transfiguration of Christ, but also the transformation, the transfiguration of His disciples.

The glorified Christ is the model and prototype of who we are and who we are to become. The transfiguration reveals our origin and our completion and fullness. Like the disciples we are not simply spectators. We too participate in this event. So how does that happen?

Often our reading of this story focuses on what is seen: the change in appearance of Jesus' face, clothes that become dazzling white, the appearance of Moses and Elijah, the glory of Christ, and the overshadowing cloud.

These, no doubt, are central to the transfiguration. But Rev. Marsh points out that we may be emphasizing the light of transfiguration to exclusion of the voice of transfiguration. We are looking but are we listening?

Listen is the only thing the disciples are told throughout this whole event. Listening is central to transfiguration. Jesus is silent. So it must be about more than words, instructions, and lessons. Listening always is.

True listening is an interior quality, a way of being. It is more about the heart than the ears. And it is more about silence than words.

Ultimately, listening is about presence.

The disciples are being told to be present, be open, be receptive to the one who is already and always present to you. Listening creates an opening through which the transfigured Christ enters and transforms us.

Listening asks of us intention, attention, and letting go of the things that deafen us because anything that destroys or limits presence is a form of deafness. Things like holding on to the past, self-doubt, fear, competition, comparison, anger, resentment.

Listening is difficult. It requires our attention, discipline, whether we are listening to God, our spouses, friends, children, co-workers, strangers or enemies.

As difficult as it is, if we take it on and start truly listening, which is a spiritual discipline, we will be opened up healing, reconciliation and union. Listening takes us to the Mount of Transfiguration.

So it would seem that the Transfiguration occurred not so much for the sake of the Lord as for the sake of His disciples. Even if they did not fully understand Him then, just like we can misunderstand Him today.

In this Gospel story, not only did Peter, James and John get a glimpse of the glory that Jesus was destined for, but of the glory they were destined for as well. And we are today's witnesses of this glory.

We too need to put our trust in what took place in the transfiguration story. We too need to, as the voice from the cloud said: "Listen to Him".

Like Peter and his disciples, we can do so with enthusiasm - "it is good that we are here." And sometimes, as they were just moments later, we are "very much afraid."

Let us pray: Father, may the light of Christ's transfiguration illuminate and transform us into His glorious image. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

