

First Reading: Genesis 22.1-2, 9-13, 15-18

Second Reading: Romans 8.31b-35, 27

Gospel: Mark 9.2-10

We begin today with the reading of Abraham who is about to sacrifice his son. It wasn't until I read the reflection of the day in the Living With Christ that I began to be able to think about it and how it reminded me that human sacrifice was very common back in the day of the Book of Genesis. It seems that many if not most of Gods that were followed and served by different peoples all demanded sacrifice – human sacrifice. But here is the importance of this story in Genesis: the God of Abraham was the only God who did not demand such a sacrifice but who in fact provided Abraham and all of us today with a sacrifice. God's own son was to be the sacrifice of all time and it is this that we reflect on and hopefully come to know more deeply during our Lenten Journey. This story from Genesis which has been so unthinkable now becomes a gift.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, we hear once again about the sacrifice of a son – but this time it is God sacrificing his son, allowing Jesus to be sacrificed out of love for all of us. Paul's letter is about total and absolute love, about the sacrifice of love and what that looks like today in light of the Gospels. Jesus is the sacrifice, Jesus is oblation; Jesus is for all time the perfect sacrifice of love. He presents himself as the image of God's love for each of us. I think of the love of a mother – or father towards their child. They sacrifice their sleep and comfort out of love for a baby who is totally defenceless and relies on them for everything. There is the love of a teacher for a child who struggles to understand and learn, so they spend more time with that child. There is the love of some, and I am thinking of the last world war where prisoners offered to take the place of another condemned and chosen to die, so that they might manage to survive. Sacrifices of self because of great love.

Last week we heard about Jesus going into the wilderness, the desert to pray in preparation for the beginning of what we call his public life. This weekend we have him taking three of his disciples with him up the mountain to pray. He is no longer alone as he was in the desert. And it is in his praying and being one with his Father that we see who Jesus is. Jesus has entered so fully into the presence and oneness with God that the disciples see him as the Father sees him with eyes of perfect love. This is the son whom God will sacrifice for all of us. This is what perfect sacrifice born out of love looks like.

Teilhard de Chardin in his Hymn of the Universe wrote; “To understand the world knowledge is not enough, you must see it, touch it, live in its presence.” Jesus’s public life started out with the three disciples seeing quite clearly our crucified and risen Saviour on the top of the mountain. It was not enough for them to just see him, they needed to touch and live in his presence both before and after the resurrection to fully know his spirit, to know him as son of God. And so they came down from the mountain together.

The transfiguration is an invitation from God, from Jesus to get close to him, to get to know him enough to imitate him as we are each called in our state of life. God wants to fill our hearts totally.

One of the things that I have noticed for about a year now is that with the wearing of masks it is hard to recognize some – there are some who I do recognize but there are others with only their eyes that I am not fully familiar with. But more and more I get used to seeing them in a new light with only their eyes to invite and share their hearts. Last weekend as Eucharistic Minister I recognized you from your eyes as you approached me. What a joy that was for me to see through new eyes those I have loved all along and now to experiencing recognition of your hearts speaking through your eyes. I was able

to greet Jesus in every single one of you. What a blessing, what a gift to receive. Not really a transfiguration, but perhaps God allowing me to see through the eyes of our crucified Saviour. A shared moment of intimacy and the love of God. A true revelation of love. And then afterwards we left the church – coming down from the mountain but that gift has remained alive within me.

Last week Jarek Pachocki, an Oblate friend spoke about St. Eugene de Mazenod's Lenten Homily from 1813 when he said: "Come now and learn who you are in the eyes of faith." The people to whom he spoke were the poorest of the poor in France, the laborers, the workers, the prisoners, the forgotten and with them we accompanied Jesus into the desert. This week we are given a foretaste of who we are in the transfiguration of Jesus – as Eugene de Mazenod continued his Lenten homily: "You are the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-heirs of his eternal kingdom, the cherished portion of his inheritance – you are in the words of Saint Peter, a holy nation, you are kings and queens.

In closing I share Pope Francis's words from his Angelus on the second Sunday of Lent in 2014: "We need to go to the place of retreat, to climb the mountain and go to a place of silence, to find ourselves and better perceive the voice of the Lord. We cannot stay there, however. The encounter with God in prayer again pushes us to come down from the mountain and back down into the plain, where we meet many brothers and sisters weighed down by fatigue, injustice and both material and spiritual poverty."

What will it look for each of us as we leave this holy place and meet the many who are a holy nation of kings and queens?

**--Eleanor Rabnett (St. Joseph's Parish, Ottawa)**