

## HOMILY – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT 2021

This second Sunday of Lent means we are a week and a half into Lent. So, I think I better get started reflecting about the year gone by and line up my hopes and fears and actions for the coming year. In one sense , I don't really want to reflect about the year gone by. It's been painful, fearful, boring at times, disconcerting, not fun. I haven't seen family, friends, or the countryside. I can't stand the news programs with all the COVID deaths, so full of sadness.

I dislike wearing masks but I do wear them so others will be safe. One thing about the masks though, besides keeping everyone safe, is that they keep your face warm in the cold weather!

Well, I like to look upon Lent as the Church's way of leading us into a reflective mood...figuring out who we are as a community and who I am as an individual. Part of that discovery

process is examining my/our relationship with God: Creator, Redeemer, Keeper of the Covenant. And, have I helped others deal with this pandemic, loneliness, sadness? A friend sent me a photo of Sr. Isaac Newton. It says that when he stayed home to avoid the plague of 1665, he discovered the Laws of gravity, and optics. Makes me feel like I have wasted the pandemic time. Well, looking at these readings for today: the sacrifice of Isaac or the test of Abraham and the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mt Tabor, left me wondering how they relate to me or how I relate to them? The Genesis reading seems like an awful lot to ask of Abraham to sacrifice his son! And Mark's passage in which we learn of Jesus appearing to the three apostles in dazzling white clothes with God announcing to them that this is the Son of God, but they can't tell anyone until He had risen from the dead! What are these readings saying to me, to us?

Well, both stories are expressions of mystery. The OT reading is a dark mystery that ends with a little bit of light. Abraham still isn't sure of his journey but his confidence in God is stronger.

The NT reading is a mystery bathed in light, it darkens somewhat but then it comes into an extraordinary light after the resurrection of Jesus, and that light is still getting stronger today.

In both stories God is present. Believers do have the light even though the journey may be difficult, full of suffering and sometimes frightening. Something else to notice in both stories is that none of the people came back down the mountain the same. All were changed in their encounter with God. A point for reflection is that meeting God changes you. You may ask, where do I meet God? You may be thinking he's not going to tell me I can meet God at CVS, Starbucks, Dunkin', Whole Foods or Stop and Shop, or at home or the office, is he?

But that is precisely what I am telling you. God is present

everywhere. God is present at Mass, to be sure, but also in struggles like Abraham's and blinding moments of revelation like Peter, James and John. And in more simple and quiet places and ways too. You meet God in a person, in immigrants and refugees, a scripture passage, an event, a poem, a song, over a cup of coffee. So it's important to reflect, to examine your day each day, since you don't want to miss an encounter with God. You want to spend your life finding God in all things.

I hope that you have **had** or will have an encounter with God and like the Apostles have come down from the mountain, changed. Having grown up a bit we can understand that relationships with others change and depend on how we relate to them. When we were kids growing up we often heard our parents tell us to play fair, share our toys, and not to fight. Isn't

that a good lesson for us to follow in our adult years and good role modeling for the younger generations? Isn't that a good lesson for world leaders to follow instead of threats and violence? Maybe this pandemic will cause us to care more deeply for one another, treat each other with kindness, trust each other. Abraham trusted God and Isaac benefitted from that trust. Peter, James and John trusted Jesus and we have benefitted from that trust. Trust God so that all our brothers and sisters may benefit. This is one of my hopes that is brighter than my fears.

In our Lenten reflection we look back on our lives and realize that God has always walked with us. We examine any present difficulty and know that God is at our side. And we are assured that in the future God is never far away. We have to climb that mountain and have that encounter but we must come back down and live the encounter knowing that we are not the same,

knowing that we can love each other and be at peace with one another as God loves us and is at peace with us.

Think about it. Pray about it. It takes effort and action, thoughts and prayers are not enough! Reflect on it as we proceed through the second week of Lent.