

II Lent – Year B – 2/25/2018

Had a phone call from my little brother, Walter, Jr., this morning. We caught up on family and our take on current events. Nice call. He called back an hour later. He said, “I forgot to tell you something.” He then told about his two grandsons who play on the same basketball team. They had a great comeback and won the game. On the way home in the car they started singing the “Gloria” they like from the Church they attend. Though, liturgically speaking, we don’t normally sing the “Gloria” during Lent, perhaps we should always sing it on the Second Sunday of Lent as we recall the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Though I forget many things with age, there are things that are always on my mind – like the transformative moments that involve death and life: either poignant times or great joys and we find ourselves breaking into song. They are moments that change us forever. They’re worth a song for sure.

We also have the story of Abraham’s great faith – willing to sacrifice his Son – depicted in the stained glass window to the right. God’s urgent call to Abraham stops the sacrifice. And that second call turns Abraham’s great sadness (no doubt) into joy. The ram (St. Louis) lingering in the bush is sacrificed instead. Abraham has passed the test with his great faith.

Paul (Romans) goes beyond the Genesis author’s vision. He believes God’s love of Jesus and of us is so powerful and deep that those who die and rise with Jesus actually become one with Jesus. Who can bring a charge against God’s chosen ones? No one: because it is God who can’t stop loving the Christ or any of us. We are to be the body of Christ for one another and all.

Just as Jesus receives an insight into his personality when baptized by John at the Jordan River, so do the apostles on their journey with Jesus to the “top of the mountain” experience. That is why Mark places Jesus between Moses and Elijah, conversing with both the great law-giver and prophet. The evangelist has Peter ask to build three tents for the three “greats” among them. This is a reference to the Jesus feast of tents or tabernacles. It recalls God’s presence with the Israelites in the desert.

Yet, the most important statement in the story might be Mark’s observation that “...looking around they saw no longer saw anyone with them...only Jesus.” Like all insights, their glimpse into Jesus’ real personality only lasts a moment or two. Yet this experience will totally change how they live their lives. So, as we ponder the transfiguration, we ask how have we changed to “put on Christ?”

And that is the point for us to ponder this Second Sunday of Lent. Do we “put on Christ” in our imitating his dying and rising every day? Can we remember God’s glory with us as we do our best to lift each other up by the way that we die to ourselves in God’s service, our life-giving service to others? It is easier to say it than live it. But God is good...all the time. Let us be the same...for God is with us...all the time.

I wonder if Peter, James and John broke into song on the way down the mountain with Jesus.