

HOMILY for 2nd SUNDAY of LENT – Year A

This Sunday's readings talk about the mountain of God & Promised Land. As I reflect on that topic, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

Brett Favre & Barry Sanders die & go to Heaven. After Brett Favre enters the Pearly Gates, God takes him on a tour. He shows him a little two-bedroom house with a faded Packers banner hanging from the front porch and says, "This is your house, Brett. You know, most people don't get their own houses up here."

Favre looks at the house, then turns around & looks at the one sitting on top of the hill. It's a huge two-story mansion with Michigan flags lining both sides of the sidewalk & a huge Lions banner hanging between the marble columns.

Favre says, "Hey! How come I get this little two bedroom house, & Barry Sanders gets a huge mansion?"

God says, "That's not Sanders' house, it's mine!"

Anyway, last Sunday we celebrated the beginning of Lenten season & were invited to come home to God. We do that by paying a little more attention to our spiritual life & avoiding to be a source of temptation or bad influence to people around us. Jesus Himself did not want us to be a bad example to our neighbors, especially to the little children. He suggested a harsh punishment for all the violators. If last Sunday we were called to avoid the Devil & the temptation by the power of darkness, this Sunday we are asked to invite others to go up the mountain of God & head to the Promised Land. We should introduce more people to God & the Heavenly hosts. That is exactly what Jesus did in today's Gospel which is reported as following: "Jesus took Peter, James, & his brother John & led them up a high mountain by themselves. He was transfigured before their eyes. His face became as dazzling as the Sun, his clothes as radiant as light. Suddenly Moses & Elijah appeared to them conversing with Him. Upon this, Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, how good it is for us to be here! With your permission, I will erect three booths here, one for you, one for Moses, & one for Elijah.'"

As you can see, Jesus wanted three of His disciples to have an experience of the mountain of God. First of all, the lucky three were able to see the divine Jesus along with other Heavenly hosts such as Moses & Elijah. That experience was something they never had before on earth. They loved the experience & the mountain of God so much that they did not want to end it. That reminds us of the near-death experiences that some people went through & came back to tell others about them. These lucky folks who were blessed with a glimpse of Heaven said that they saw a warm, bright light & wished to stay with that light forever. They all did not want to come back here to earth. That is exactly how the three disciples felt & why they wished to stay on the mountain of God forever. They did not want to leave that place & return here to earth. The mountain of God is definitely where Jesus would want all of His disciples to be. For that is the home for God & all the Heavenly hosts.

If the mountain of God is home for Jesus's disciples, the Promised Land was home for the people of God. Today's First Reading shares with us the dream of the people of God to enter the Promised Land as following, "The Lord said to Abram: 'Go forth from the land of your kinsfolks & from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, & I will bless you... I will bless those who bless you & curse those who curse you.'" So, evidently the Lord promised Abram & the people of God a prosperous land that they could

produce abundant food & build a great nation for many generations of their families. But, as we might recall from the Bible, Abram & a lot of the people of God did not make it to the Promised Land. It took the people of God many years of slavery in foreign land & forty years in the desert before they could make it there. They also had to endure lots of hardship & trials on their way to that land. But, I'm sure they would not want to leave the Promised Land once they've got there.

The people of God wanted to make it to the Promised Land. The disciples of Jesus wish to be on the mountain of God & stay there forever. If I ask where everyone here would want to be after this life, we all would have to say that it's Heaven/Paradise. For that is where we will have no more pain & suffering of this life. We will not have to deal with the challenges & injustices that we have to endure here every day. We will not have to worry about the lack of resources & social security for our daily life. God will take care of all our needs & other concerns of our daily life. God will grant us eternal peace & happiness in Heaven. Most importantly, God will let us see Jesus & all the important figures in our Christian tradition, especially all of our loved ones who have gone before us. It will be a joyous re-union for God's faithful ones in Heaven. We Christians look forward to that awesome time & cannot wait to be in that new home with God.

That is the message that this Sunday wants to remind us. We Christians need to keep that message in our hearts & minds at all time. We should share that Good News with the whole world every day. Unfortunately, we let our politicians tell us what to worry about & how to focus our earthly life on. We constantly fight with one another over political & social issues. We do not focus & talk enough with people around us about Heaven & the eternal life being promised to God's faithful ones. We do not invite people to have a church worshipping experience & let the world know about all the benefits of a life in Heaven like Jesus did in today's Gospel. We need to welcome more people to the mountain of God or Heaven & share with others more about the rewards of the life in Paradise with Jesus. Can you imagine how many people would flock to churches if we do all of that with them?

My dear brothers & sisters, everything in this life, including politics & earthly things will not last forever. We should not fight & invest our effort & resources on the things of this world. Instead, we should use God's blessings for us in this life to gain for ourselves a place in Heaven/Paradise. We should also invite other people around us to go up the mountain of God & have a Heavenly experience like Jesus did with His three disciples in today's Gospel. When we do that, we will help our world meet God & bring hope & God's love to it.