

HOMILY for 2nd SUNDAY of LENT – Year C

This Sunday's Gospel shares with us how the three Apostles felt about their Heavenly experience. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this favorite cute story of mine to share with you.

A husband & his wife were driving home one night; unfortunately they ran into a bridge abutment & both were killed. They arrived in Heaven & found that it has a beautiful golf course with a lovely clubhouse & fabulous greens. It was free & only for them; & the husband said: "Honey, you want to play a round?"

She said, "Sure." They teed off on the first hole, & she asked, "What's wrong?"

He said, "You know, dear, if it hasn't been for your stupid oat bran, we could have been here years ago."

Anyway, if last Sunday Jesus was led into the desert to confront some of the demons & their temptations, this Sunday we learn that Jesus led three of his disciples up to Mount Tabor to have a divine experience with God the Father & other important figures in the Jewish Tradition. That way they would have a strong commitment & determination to follow Jesus' journey of the Cross all the way to the end & receive the Heavenly rewards from God the Father. In Church tradition, desert is usually a place where demons & evil spirits reside. The fathers & mothers of the desert used to go to the desert to face their demons & all the temptations in their quiet prayer time. I recall taking a course in the seminary about those figures in our Christian Tradition & seeing how they struggled to confront the temptations & still remain faithful to God. That course helped me understand the whole idea of the desert & why some spiritual masters like Jesus would often visit it before an important event in their lives. That visit would help them put all the distractions under control & focus on the important tasks ahead.

After His visit to the desert last Sunday, this Sunday Jesus goes up to Mount Tabor to have a divine encounter along with three of His disciples. This Sunday's Gospel tells us about that encounter as following: "Jesus took Peter, John, & James, & went up onto a mountain to pray. While He was praying, His face changed in appearance & His clothes became dazzlingly white. Suddenly two men were talking with Him – Moses & Elijah. They appeared in glory & spoke of His passage which He was about to fulfill in Jerusalem." It continues, "...When these were leaving, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, how good it is for us to be here. Let us set up three booths, one for you, one for Moses, & one for Elijah.'"

In the Bible & human Tradition, mountain is often considered a sacred place where God resides because it is the highest part of the earth that could touch Heaven. Abraham often went up a mountain to have an intimate meeting with God, including the meeting where he was asked to sacrifice His one & only son Isaac. Moses also went up a mountain to receive the Ten Commandments of God written down on two stone tablets. A lot of people have searched out the mountain tops over the years to strengthen their spirit & give them courage & resolve to take on their upcoming serious tasks or important missions. Likewise, Jesus & three of His disciples today have followed that long tradition & gone up Mount Tabor to have a divine experience & get themselves spiritually ready for His upcoming Passion. We got to do the same this Lent & find a spiritual mountain to prepare ourselves spiritually for the upcoming Holy Week.

Where could we find a spiritual mountain to meet God this Lent? One of those places that we would be able to meet God is right here in church. As you might know, in time of anguish & turmoil, one place that people usually want to stop by & find peace & guidance would be a church like this one. I have seen people stop by this sacred place throughout the week to say hi to Jesus, or seek peace for their souls during tumultuous time such as Covid-19 & September 11. Furthermore, every time we gather around that Altar to celebrate Mass, we are reminded of Jesus' Last Supper & strengthened by its spiritual nourishment.

However, Church & Mass are not the only spiritual mountains where we could meet God. We could have a divine encounter when we pray, when we read the Bible or a spiritual book, or when we take a quiet walk with Jesus. For God would often use that prayer time to talk to us & open our minds & hearts to understand a spiritual matter or an important issue a little better. That is why over the years many spiritual leaders have spent lots of time in prayer to have a divine experience & ask God to help them figure out some important issues. That is why during Lent the Church calls us to pray a little more & hopefully have a wonderful opportunity to encounter God.

There is another spiritual mountain that we could meet God in Lent, namely, making acts of personal sacrifice & kindness. When we make a personal sacrifice such as fasting or abstaining from meat or some bad habit, God is proud of us & ready to reward us for our sacrifice. When we do an act of charity or practice almsgiving in Lent, we might think that we are doing it for a needy person. But, we actually do it for Jesus. For Jesus once said, "When you do an act of kindness or charity for the least among you, you do it for me." That is why it is absolutely wrong for our country to ignore the plight of the poor & cut down all their social benefits. If we keep going down that wrong path, our country will never have a divine experience & wonderful blessings from God. Instead, we will encounter divine curses & all kinds of horrible consequences in the future because God does hear the outcry of the poor & the outcast.

My dear brothers & sisters, this Sunday's First Reading lets us know about the divine blessing on Abraham if he would follow God's Commandments as following: "Look up at the sky & count the stars, if you can. Just so shall your descendants be." Similarly, if we follow Jesus' Commandments of love & search for more spiritual mountains to meet God this Lent, we will surely be rewarded abundantly & have an unforgettable divine experience in this holy season. We will also be ready to celebrate Holy Week & blessed with an incredible experience of Easter miracle like the early Church did.