

HOMILY for 2nd SUNDAY of LENT – Year A

Jesus' journey up the mountain with three of His disciples to meet God the Father in this Sunday's Gospel reminds me of this cute story about desperate prayers that I'd like to share with you.

Worshippers at All Saints Church were invited to a special Lenten study on Prayer. At the close of the course, Pastor Nixon invited the participants to write sentence prayers. Here are some of those prayers:

"Lord, help me to relax about insignificant details – beginning at 7:41:23 AM, EST."

"God, help me to consider people's feelings, even if most of them hypersensitive."

"Father, help me take responsibility for my own actions, even though they're usually not my fault."

"Dear God, help me not try to run everything. But, if you need help, feel free to ask me."

"Lord, help me to be more laid back, & help me do it exactly right."

"Heavenly Father, please help me take things more seriously, especially having a good time."

"God, give me patience; & I mean right now!"

"Lord, help me not to be a perfectionist. (Did I spell that correctly?)"

"Lord, keep me open to other people's idea, wrong though they may be." Amen!

Anyway, last Sunday we were told that Jesus entered the desert to face the Devil & its temptations. He invited us & all Christians to follow in His footsteps & confront the Devil's temptations in our lives as we try to walk the journey of the Cross with Jesus this Lent. This Sunday we learn that Jesus decided to go up Mt. Tabor to meet God the Father & brought along three of His disciples to show them His true identity. But, why did Jesus want to do all of that?

Before we address that question, I'd like to point out a couple of important factors in this story that we have often overlooked. First, it's not by accident that Jesus took those three disciples: Peter, James, & John. Peter was the disciple that Jesus wanted to build His Church upon. So, it makes sense that Jesus would take him along & let him experience the Lord's divine power. But, what about James & John, the sons of Zebedee or, of thunder? We might recall that their mother once came up to Jesus & asked Him to let her sons sit on both sides of the Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus evidently did not grant her request, but wondered if her sons could drink the cup of suffering that He was about to undertake. Then, He reminded her that God the Father would determine the seating arrangement in the Kingdom of Heaven. Moreover, John was the disciple whom Jesus loved & favored & was the one to whom the Lord assigned His beloved Mother at the foot of the Cross. John was also given the seat next to Jesus at the Last Supper. Therefore, it is understandable that Jesus would take these two brothers along with Peter up to Mt. Tabor & gave them the special revelation. Thankfully Jesus did not take Judas Iscariot up there. So, Jesus did not randomly pick those three disciples. I hope that we would live & follow our Lord faithfully so that He would take us up to His Kingdom someday.

Lastly, it was not only God the Father to whom Jesus had revealed to the three disciples as the voice from the bright cloud said, "This is my beloved Son on whom my favor rests. Listen to Him." We were told in this Sunday's Gospel that two important figures of the Old Testament – Moses & Elijah – also appeared to those disciples & conversed with Jesus. Their appearance confirms that Jesus' God the Father is the same god that guided & did countless miracles for the

people of God in the Old Testament. Moreover, Jesus was certainly the fulfillment of ancient prophecies as those two Old Testament figures got connected with the Lord. Their hope & dream for the Messiah finally came true through Jesus.

Now, let's find out why Jesus wanted to bring along three of His disciples up to Mt. Tabor before His journey of the Cross. If the desert is typical place in the Bible for someone to face the Devil, the mountain is the highest place on earth for someone to reach Heaven & meet God. That is where Jesus went this Sunday to connect with God the Father & find strength for His tough journey of the Cross. If Jesus had to rely on God the Father & the divine power to take on the journey of the Cross, don't you think that His disciples could use the same divine assistance? That is why Jesus took three of them along & got them connected to the divine power in preparation for the tough road ahead. The disciples did not realize how important the divine power was for their missionary journey until the descent of the Holy Spirit. That power would give them strength & courage to go on that difficult journey.

In case we need an example to prove the vital role of the divine power on a missionary journey, this Sunday's First Reading has the following story to tell us, "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 you a great nation, & I will bless you... All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you.' Abram went as the Lord directed him... Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran." As you can see, Abraham was an old man when the Lord sent him out to search for the Promised Land & secure it for the people of God. He sure could not have taken on that tough mission & gone on that journey alone. At seventy-five years old, he needed all the help he could get & counted on the Lord to be his strength & guidance. Even with the divine assistance, it had taken the people of God over forty years to take possession of the Promised Land, where milk & honey would flow from. Indeed, without God, we can do nothing.

Meanwhile, in today's Second Reading, St. Paul gives us this advice for our journey of faith, "Bear your share of the hardship which the Gospel entails. God has saved us & has called us to a holy life, not because of any merit of ours but according to His own design." So, St. Paul calls on us to put our trust in God's own plan & try to live a holy life in spite of our daily hardship. That is how we could take on the journey of the Cross this Lent & complete the mission that Jesus entrusted to us. Otherwise, all the life challenges & daily distractions would discourage us from that journey & make us abandon a holy life.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus went up Mt. Tabor today & took along three of His disciples to have a divine encounter & find strength for their upcoming journey of the Cross. Here is Peter's response to that experience in today's Gospel, "Lord, how good it is for us to be here! With your permission, I will build three booths here; one for you, one for Moses, & one for Elijah." I hope we could go up a mountain with Jesus & have a divine experience this Lent in our prayer time. That way we would complete the journey of the Cross with Jesus & find wonderful blessings in the upcoming days.