

2nd Sunday in Lent

Every day when we recite the *Angelus*, we pray that we may be brought to the glory of Christ's resurrection by his passion and cross. This is exactly what theologians call "paschal mystery of Christ". The Hebrew word 'pascha' means passing over and it refers to Christ's passing over to glory through his passion and death. 'Mystery' refers to a hidden plan made by God to save us only through the suffering and death of Jesus and not in any other way. The message of the Transfiguration is, we can reach the mountain of glory only after crossing over the valley of suffering. In short, there is no crown (= glory) without a cross (= suffering).

What is a cross? It is a symbol of three things: (1) *suffering* because Jesus underwent terrible suffering on it; (2) *sacrifice* because he sacrificed his life on it; and (3) *humiliation* because he died the shameful death of a criminal on it. The crosses in our life can be persons, situations, places, work or job and responsibilities that give us a lot of pain, agony, physical and mental torture, discomfort, risk and humiliation.

The same voice of the Father that appealed to the apostles to listen to Jesus as he is his Beloved Son, appeals to us to listen to and imitate Jesus in our moments of trials, temptation, sufferings, humiliation and rejection. How can we listen to Jesus, if we are not attuned to his voice by remaining close to him in prayer? How can we listen to him, if we follow the latest trends of the consumerist society instead of following him? In our hunger for power, position and ambitions, we are reminded to imitate him, who rejected these worldly standards in obedience to God's will. As God's beloved sons/ daughters in whom he is well pleased, even in our failure and humiliation, we are called to walk in his footsteps, that is, walk the way of the cross.

We are called to follow a suffering Messiah, who attains his glory through the cross. If we have tried to avoid the cross, then Lent is the most appropriate time to listen to him, to follow his footsteps by embracing the cross. We listen to Jesus in his Word found in the Gospel. Amidst so many other contrary voices of the world that come through bad companions, misleading guides and mass media, do we try to keep attuned to our Master's voice?

Like Peter, we have a tendency to prolong happiness and stay fixed on the mountain of glory and escape from the problems and hardships of life. We have a desire to attain glory and prolong its joy by trying to avoid crosses. As fathers of families, you want to attain unity and

harmony in your families, but without sacrificing your time for guiding your children; as husbands, you want better understanding with your wives, but without spending time for communicating mutual expectations; we want a corruption-free society, but won't mind giving bribe to avoid trouble and inconveniences for us; we want children to obey us, but do not practice what we preach to them because of which we lose respect and obedience from them; we want peace, but do not want to forgive or take steps for reconciliation.

The lesson drawn from the transfiguration of Christ teaches us that our Christian life has two inseparable elements: "ascending" and "descending" or "going up the mountain" and "coming down the mountain". We need to ascend or "go up the mountain" to encounter the Lord in prayer, to listen to his voice. But we cannot stay there permanently even if we happen to get 'mystical visions.' Our intimacy with the Master and experience of his glory in prayer and contemplation energizes us to go "down the mountain" to face the hardships of life, which are our daily crosses, just as the disciples descended from the mountain to proceed with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane and to Mount Calvary. This intimacy also inspires us to reach out to the sick, the hungry, the poor.

Every Eucharistic celebration is also like a mountain-top experience that energizes us to face trials of life. But we cannot say like Peter: It is good for us to be here all the time. At the end of the mass, the priest will say: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving others. He also sends us to take up our crosses and follow the Lord. Since during liturgy, we are with Christ on the mountain, and are given spiritual nourishment, we can go out from here with the hope that his strength will be with us in our trials and daily crosses.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, grant that we may be brought to the glory of your resurrection by your passion and cross. Touch us and raise us up with your strength so that we do not run away from the cross or escape from sacrifices involved in fulfilling your mission. Grant that we may imitate your way of sacrificial love for the salvation of the world. Give us the courage and strength to carry our daily crosses so that we may share your glory. Confirm us with an unwavering hope in your promises so that we may courageously face sufferings of this life. Amen.