

Second Sunday of Lent

Today we hear in our second reading, St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "If God is for us, who can be against us?". There is no question that God is truly for us; for he gave us his only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ to be with us, save us and bring us to eternal life. This is highlighted in our readings today for this Second Sunday of the season of Lent.

In our first reading from the book of Genesis, we hear of the dramatic story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham obediently followed God's directions, for this was a test of faith for Abraham. We cannot even begin to imagine what was going on in Abraham's mind and heart – distress, sorrow, maybe anger, and so on. After all, Isaac was a gift from God, a miracle child so to speak, to both Abraham and Sarah in their old age. But Abraham truly trusted in God, loved Him and was willing to give back to God what God has given him. Abraham remained faithful to God, even in this difficult and soul wrenching command.

As Abraham was about to kill his son Isaac for the sacrifice, the Lord's messenger intervened and called on him to not lay his hand on the boy. Because of Abraham's devotion to God, he was rewarded with descendants as countless as the stars in the heavens. The Lord's messenger exclaimed that because Abraham followed God's commands, his descendants will defeat their enemies and be blessed forever. Truly God is for Abraham and all the nations of the earth from his descendants. Truly God is for us.

Then in Mark's Gospel, we hear of another beautiful story, that of the transfiguration of Jesus. The context of this story is that on the way to Jerusalem where he would be crucified, Jesus told his disciples of his upcoming sufferings and death. Because of this, the disciples were deeply saddened. To raise their spirits and cheer them up, Jesus took them up to a high mountain and he was transfigured before them, to show that God's glory endures forever, even in life's saddest moments.

Even now, God's glory shines in the darkest places of our lives: in times of distress, as Abraham experienced; in times of sorrow, suffering, war, pain, insecurity, and so forth. The glory of the Holy Trinity endures, shines forth even in the most difficult times of our lives, if we hold them up to the light of faith. Even now, we are given intimations, brief encounters, transfigurations of a lesser kind, as we confront the mystery of suffering. The Holy Trinity is truly for us.

During this Lenten season and every day of our lives, we are called by Christ to carry our crosses patiently, lovingly and follow him on this way of the Cross. In our Lenten and life journeys, Pope Francis asks us to reflect on three questions: (1) What have you/we left on the cross? (2) What has the cross left for you/us? (3) What does this cross teach us?

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It is not God's will that the Cross burden us too much. Even now, Jesus reveals his glory to us as we go through life, that we do not lose heart. Since God is for us, who can possibly be against us?

This homily was written by Alvin D. Paligutan, O.S.A., St. Augustine Monastery, San Diego, California. I made some minor adjustments to it for use this weekend.