

Homily

2nd Sunday of Lent B 3.8.20

Father Todd Molinari

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The 40 days of Lent form a time of grace where we seek new life in Christ through our daily spiritual practices of fasting, praying and doing works of mercy. Lent is a time for a renewal of our faith: New life in Christ for ourselves in the most profound and authentic way so that we can be Christ to the poor and the suffering. For our faith to be real and authentic it has to be transformative. God our Father offers us the relationship that will transfigure us, just as He transfigured Jesus in the sight of Peter, James and John.

Yet isn't it true that while we say we are open to transfiguration and nominally agree with the notions of becoming more Christ-like, in reality we often resist change at the moments where it makes the biggest difference or where it could really alter our lives in an authentic way. In our thinking and acting and we can miss the opportunity to respond to the transfiguration because we effectively want to stay at the bottom of the holy mountain and resist going up Mt. Tabor with Jesus, Peter, James and John, no matter how much we admire the reading from the Gospel. Oftentimes our fear of the unknown in the spiritual life, or in our relationship with God will hold us back from setting forth to new life. The transfiguring grace of Lent then is about the not-knowing, our incapacity, a rediscovery that life is not about achievement, riches, power or success. It not about conforming to this world but being a part of the kingdom that "is not of this world" as Jesus says.

Leaving home and going to a far country is what the adventure of life and the discovery of faith is all about. But it always involves discomfort and growing pains. The reading from Genesis calls us to the covenant to which the Lord is always faithful, where God's promise to Abraham that his descendants will be as countless as the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore. The sacrifice of Isaac was a primordial test for Abraham to put his whole life in God's hands. The call to covenant always involves going forth outside of ourselves; it calls for trust; it means we have to go out of our comfort zones and social bubbles, our places of "being stuck" where we will just have our biases and false assurances reaffirmed. If we stay there, we do not grow, we are not transformed; and we are not putting our trust in the Lord. We keep ourselves from Him and miss the chances that He offers us to respond to Him. The Lenten Season calls us to broaden our point of view and to see things from God's perspective - to trust in his call. Oftentimes the call for transfiguration does not involve physical locomotion from one place to another, but rather an interior change of our ideas of who we are and what we think is important. Think of the present coronavirus threat: Although there are physical adjustments that we all have to make for the sake of public health and safety, what is more central is our interior life - how we react to threats, potential destabilization in society, and the lack of stability. Times of testing, pressurized situations and stress are opportunities for us to be "tested" in the Abrahamic manner in which our true beliefs and convictions are revealed. This too is a grace during Lent.

The Transfiguration of our Lord underlines this by showing us that the way to glory is only through the way of the cross - the total and complete self-emptying of God in Jesus on the cross out of total love. And it's not just a path that Jesus is going to walk down but it is the only path for you and me as well if we are to be his disciples. That way of the cross is marked by our spiritual

practices of prayer, fasting, repentance and almsgiving. These lead to transfiguration because they lead us along the way of the cross.

The Lenten transfiguring graces through fasting and self-denial is our radical renunciation of everything that we are tied down to or implicated in which prevents us from moving towards new life in Jesus. It is our participation in the way of the cross so that as we die to ourselves as they are implicated in the illusions of self-centeredness and falsehood we can have the openness to new life. The point of transfiguration is not just to make us pure and holy in a “look-at-me” way, but it is to conform our lives to Jesus in his self-emptying on the cross. This Lent is the “now” of grace that moves us to put this into practice.