

2nd Sunday of Lent

Cycle A, 3.12.17

Genesis 12:1-4/2 Timothy 1:8-10/

Matthew 17:1-9

CONSTRUCTION ZONE: WORK IN PROGRESS

Most youngsters at a certain age are enthralled with LEGO building blocks. Laid end to end, the number of plastic LEGO bricks sold in one year would reach around the world more than five times. They say that there are 62 LEGO pieces for every one person on the planet. And I'm thinking that your kids and grandkids probably have several hundred over that ratio. LEGOs across the living room floor and under the kid's bed, in the playroom, and scattered ones abandoned in the bottom of drawers, a few pieces left in pants pockets that got washed by mistake. The plastic bin from the dollar store can contain all those pieces, but until youthful imagination, creativity and resourcefulness are applied, the pieces are just that – unconnected, unrelated, colorful but incomplete. Like a story that needs an ending or a cake that needs frosting, we look for the whole picture, the finished product, and aren't satisfied until we can see it.



Today, as we move forward on our Lenten journey, we, along with Jesus' favorites – Peter, James and John – are given a glimpse of the whole picture. Dazzled by the light of God's glory shining on the face of Jesus, the disciples now understood more fully who this man of God was and where he was taking them. In this mountaintop "theophany" – this self-

revelation of God -- the three disciples, and eventually the Twelve, began to understand that this itinerant preacher they were following was more than just a carpenter who one day shuttered his shop and hit the road proclaiming God's kingdom – that is, his conviction that God was present and effectively working in the world in which we live. The voice from the heavens tells them: *This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.*

Standing on either side of Jesus were two key representatives of the entire Jewish faith – Moses, the impressive lawgiver, and Elijah, the most prestigious prophet. Their presence confirms the authority of Jesus and validates his teaching. So, for the disciples, the pieces of the puzzle are starting to come together. Aha! Here's our ancestors in the faith talking to Jesus! Their Jewish heritage is finding its fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. Their future is assured in the voice of God the Father telling them to listen to Jesus. He is the living Word. Past and future converge in this present moment. No wonder Peter, always the impetuous one, blurts out in the midst of all this glory: *Let's build three tents and stay here.* He wants a 'freeze frame.' Who wouldn't want to enjoy the vision? Like the party you don't want to come to an end, or the last note of the symphony that you wish you could sustain, knowing the applause will signal that the music's over.

But this was only to be a glimpse of glory. Jesus tells the three: *Rise, and do not be afraid.* When the dust settles, it's just them and Jesus, heading back down the mountainside to face the future together. And to impress upon them that there was work to be done in the building up of this kingdom, Jesus gives them the puzzling command: *Don't tell anyone about this until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.* I think he's warning them and us that faith is a mixed bag – filled with divine

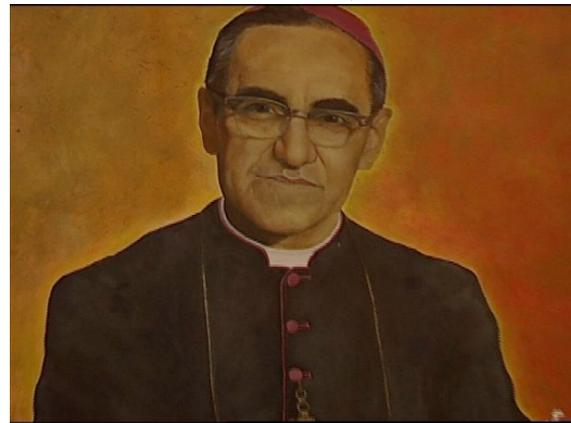
blessing and moments of clarity, yes; but, more often than not, rocky roads and stumbling blocks, unwanted crosses and frustrating attempts. Jesus walks that same road which will lead him to the cross where he will have to place his trust, as Abraham did, in the promise of God's covenant and the assurance of God's victory. It's the same road you and I have to travel every day.



Since it's Lent, I'll make an open confession. I occasionally like to watch HGTV – the home and garden channel. I don't like the series like House Hunters or Property Virgins (picky and obnoxious newly-married couples looking for their first home), or Beachfront Bargain Hunt (folks who want to escape reality and live in paradise). The ones I like are Love It or List It or Property Brothers or Flip or Flop, where they go in and take a rundown or outdated home and transform it completely, turning it into a showcase place. The potential buyers are always shocked at the computer-generated proposals the professional designers and builders show them, and they're overwhelmed at the final product as they walk into the transfigured house with their eyes wide open and an "Oh my God!" on their lips. Now, while I like those particular series, I only like the beginning of the show, where they go through the house and see all the problems and then decide on the proposed solutions for the makeover. And I like the ending of the shows where the couple comes in the front door and sees the final product. In fact, I'll read or do something else during the

show while all the demolition and reconstruction work is going on and only come back at the end to 'ooh' and 'aah' at the finished product.

Maybe it's a sign that I don't like to work? That I don't like facing the in-between stuff of messiness and uncertainties and the unsettled state of waiting for something to be finished. Our faith, which this Lenten season is meant to bolster, puts us onto the path of reconstruction and the upheaval of transformation. Following the Master day in and day out can be both challenging and confusing -- knowing the Christian thing to do in every situation; choosing the right words that will express compassion and understanding; deciding which good deed among the many demanded of us by the gospel is the one to do at this moment. Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was the bishop of San Salvador during a time of great political unrest and persecution, worked for the renovation and makeover of the human heart. He spoke out against poverty and social injustice in his country. His strong Christian stance and voice led to his assassination on March 24, 1980.



Soldiers shot him as he was celebrating the Eucharist in a convent chapel. The following words are attributed to him and I think they're appropriate for me and for all of us in our impatience and frustration as we make our way down the mountainside with Jesus – as with Abraham

we respond to God's call to take a risk and set out on a journey that calls us to new and perhaps uncharted paths:

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that should be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection,

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and do it very well.

It may be incomplete,

but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are all workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future that is not our own.

May your Lenten prayer give you a glimpse of future glory and the grace of perseverance to work confidently to renew our world and build God's Kingdom

Father John Kasper, OSFS

LOVE LIFE
LIVE  LENT
TRANSFORM YOUR WORLD