

BLESSING AND REVELATION

By Al Mansfield

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Genesis 12:1-4

Psalm 33

2 Timothy 1:8-10

Matthew 17:1-9

BLESSING AND REVELATION

The Second Sunday of Lent is always "Transfiguration Sunday." The gospel depicts the Lord Jesus giving his three apostles a "taste of glory" to prepare them for what is to come.

GENESIS

The first readings on Sundays during Lent this year take us through salvation history in the Old Testament. Today we hear how God calls Abram to leave his ancestral land - Ur of the Chaldees - to go to the land of Canaan.

God promises extraordinary blessings to Abram: to make of him a great nation and to make his name great so that he would be a blessing. God says: "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you."

Our Responsorial, Psalm 33, expresses Abraham's (and our) great trust in the Lord.

GOSPEL

The Synoptic Gospels - Matthew, Mark, and Luke - all situate the account of the Transfiguration right after Jesus speaks some challenging words about discipleship and carrying the cross.

Jesus takes Peter, James and John to a high mountain, traditionally considered to be Mount Tabor in Galilee, about 11 miles from Nazareth. Jesus is transfigured in brilliant glory and Matthew alone makes the point that "his face shone like the sun." Moses and Elijah appear and speak with Jesus. (St. Luke's gospel indicates they were speaking about his "exodus in Jerusalem" - his sufferings and death.) Peter wants to set up three tents there for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

The voice of God the Father is heard rarely in the gospels. Just as at the baptism of Jesus, the Father states, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." However, this time the Father adds, "*listen to him.*"

The disciples fall prostrate and are overcome with fear and awe. Jesus touches them and tells them to have no fear. This glimpse of Resurrection glory will have to sustain them through the terrible Passion and Death of Jesus.

2 TIMOTHY

Our first reading describes Abram's call and in the second reading, St. Paul states God's call to each of us: "He saved us and called us to a holy life..."

God's design and plan take time to develop. Consider that Abraham lived about 1900 years before Jesus came. God's plan was hidden for many ages, "but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ

Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel." What a great blessing for us to be living in this time when we enjoy the fullness of God's revelation!

A HIGH MOUNTAIN

I have had the blessing of visiting the Church of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor several times. I recall that the view from atop the mountain is spectacular - but you have to endure a rather harrowing shuttle ride on a very narrow, winding road up the mountain!

The Lord gives us special times of blessings in our lives, when we are allowed to see glimpses of his glory - albeit very dim glimpses! Then we have to "come down from our mountaintop" and continue the real work of carrying our cross and trying to grow in holiness.

Let us give thanks for all those times of blessing, glory, and revelation the Lord is pleased to grant us. And let us also pray for the strength to persevere in following the Lord when the times get tough.