

Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany

1/24/21

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*Matt 8, 1-16.*

In today's Gospel Jesus, similar to Moses, descends from the mountain and a great multitude of the sons of Israel followed him. St. Jerome writes: *"After preaching and teaching is offered an opportunity of working miracles, that by mighty works following, the preaching of the doctrine might be confirmed"*. Thus Jesus underlines our responsibility to confirm our doctrine and our teaching with our deeds. Otherwise our words become completely meaningless.

The mountain in the Holy Scripture often stands by the figure of heaven. Says the Lord: *"The heaven is my throne"*, and there are several passages of the Holy Scripture when the mountain represents the throne of God. One of the most famous passages can be found in the book of the Exodus, 20:16-25. This event of the manifestation of the glory of God on the mountain is called Theophany (*θεοφάνεια – apparition of deity*). We read: *"On the morning of the third day there were peals of thunder and lightning and a heavy cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. But Moses let the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stationed themselves at the foot of the mountain; Mountain Sinai was all wrapped in smoke, for the Lord come down upon it in fire"* (Deut 19, 16-25).

When Jesus, similar to Moses, went to contemplate God and pray to Him while ascending the mountain, Jesus brought our frail humanity upon himself... Now is our turn... Now we are called to ascend the Lord's mountain, so that *He may teach us His path and we may walk in His ways*. We, similar to

Moses and Isaiah, as well are called to ascend the Lord's mountain, bringing our frail humanity to Him so that He may heal and strengthen us.

Today's Gospel brings to our attention two different miracles: one is of the leper and the other is one of the centurion. Certainly both leper and centurion were unwelcomed by the Jewish people. and yet, even though these two miracles constitute two completely different events there is something that unites them both - it is the sense of indignity and unworthiness. These two figures help us to understand what qualities should accompany us as we strive to ascend the mountain of the Lord and being found in the presence of His light – in order to become the light for those who seek the Lord.

To finish with I'd like to present to you a short letter written by St. Therese of the Child Jesus to one of her companions. St Therese writes:

*“Dear little sister, yes, I understand all. I am begging Jesus make the sun of His grace shine in your soul. Ah! Do not fear to tell Him you love Him even without feeling it. This is the way to force Jesus to help you, to carry you like a little child too feeble to walk.*

*It is a great trial to look on the black side, but this does not depend on you completely. Do what you can; detach your heart from the worries of this earth, and above all from creature, and then be sure Jesus will do the rest. He will be unable to allow you to fall into the dreaded mire.*

*Be consoled, dear little sister, in heaven you will no longer take a dark view of everything, but a very bright view. Yes, everything will be decked out in the divine brightness of the Spouse [Jesus]”.*

Let us ask on this Holy Mass through the intercession of Our Lady for the grace to ascend the Lord's mountain being assured that certain things will be understood by us only in heaven. So far, while living in midst of the uncertainties of this world, we only have to trust in Him.