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2nd Sunday of Lent - 13 March 2022

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13 March 2022

Second Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

This series of Lenten readings focuses on who we are in God and what we can become. We are invited to ground our penitential practices in our identity as God sees it. The lections offer a meditation on being chosen, on living as imitators of Christ, and on being transformed. The self-discipline of Lent is a step towards conversion of heart and community, and fulfillment in Christ.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you showed us your glory as God the Son so that we might believe.
Lord, have mercy.

You open the way to the Father.
Christ, have mercy.

You show us God's mercy through the power of the Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

The oration

O God, who have commanded us
to listen to your beloved Son,
be pleased, we pray,
to nourish us inwardly by your word,
that, with spiritual sight made pure,
we may rejoice to behold your glory.

Commentary

The initial focus of the opening collect for the second Sunday in Lent is upon the discipline of listening. If Christ is the Word incarnate, we his followers are essentially listeners, hearers of the word. Interestingly, in the midst of the seasonal fast God is not named in this seventh century Spanish prayer as one who desires us to be hungry, but rather as one who has commanded us to listen. Our Lenten discipline ought to make us more receptive to the word. From this foundation the prayer sets a

number of images at play. Having called up our sense of hearing, the oration introduces our sense of hunger: we are to be nourished by the divine word and seek the grace to sharpen our appetite for this word. Our hunger and hearing are then related to our sight. Fed by the word, our spiritual sense of sight is healthier, and we are more fully able to rejoice as we see God's glory. The Lenten discipline of the senses results in sharper hearing, a healthier appetite and more pure sight for the joy of beholding the divine glory.

First Reading

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

The promise to Abram opens up a new imagination of what it means to live within the presence of a gracious God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 27: 1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

This psalm is often used at funerals because of the sense of hope that is expressed through the imagery of light and the strength of God. During the Lenten season we seek to be purified by word and sacrament and by our Lenten practices.

Second Reading

Philippians 3:17— 4:1

We are transformed into our true selves as we model ourselves on Christ.

Gospel Reading

Luke 9:28b-36

The silence that follows upon the realisation of Jesus' transfiguration is the first step in our hearing Christ and obeying.

Reflection

Our Lenten disciplines are focused on the possibilities of life in God, a vista opened up by our first reading. The unlikely Abram is offered an unlikely future by God, one greatly cherished by the ancients whose fortune was measured in descendants as much as in riches. Offspring meant security in old age, a measure of peace in the marketplace, and protection against enemies. Family ensured life. This invitation from God has some aspects that would have left Abram somewhat bemused. He has no offspring, and he had no great hopes in a promising future. He is right to be a bit sceptical. Yet God has had Abram in mind. The divine one has kept track of him, indeed brought the shepherd from his homeland in Ur to the present site. The wanderings of Abram have not been without divine direction.

As with the greatest Hebrew bible figures (think here Moses) Abram is not without cunning. This message that God has directed his path is not considered a guarantee. Abram bargains for more certainty: *how am I to know that I will possess it?* God strikes a covenant with this chosen agent of faith. It is a terrifying experience for Abram, and he emerges chastened, somewhat unscathed, but bonded to God. A covenant, to be clear, is not a contract between equals. Rather it is an agreement between a far superior power and an inferior one. It is a way that greater powers forge agreements with weaker peoples and nations, offering protection to the weak while building an empire. God responds to Abram's scepticism by setting him within the protection of the Mighty One and promising that protection across his descendants. It is a great show of faith in Abram, and a bargain beyond imagining for the shepherd.

Perhaps it is not quite what we would expect from a Lenten reading, however it is set in place to accompany the Gospel. In this we have some clues to the seasonal message. Our Lenten discipline is framed within the promise of salvation in God. Here it is manifested in Abram, and our reading from Romans will place that for us within our hope in Christ. As we know, Abram's faith will be tested and with this his identity changed – he becomes Abraham. This change of name is in part a change in who he is and how he understands himself. Two other Lenten themes are present. Firstly, God is behind the peregrinations of Abram: it is God who brought him to this place. For us, there is always the mystery of the present, and how God has been with us on our journeys, despite their paths and their troubles. Secondly, there is the promise. To be in God is to live in the promise: for Abram it is land and progeny. We are invited to seek the promise of life lived in Christ.

The expansive promise to Abram, of lands covering a vast area between two fertile rivers, has consequences for how we think around the environment. The peoples of the time and of later millennium did not hear in the promise that Abram owned these lands and could do with them as he liked. As a herdsman he had from God a right of use. He did not have dominion. These lands were shared, and within that cooperative arrangement Abram had a stake. The inclusion of the rivers, untamed and the guarantee of fertility, gives the forces of the environment a stake as well. This was well understood by the peoples of ancient and not so ancient times, yet it has become obscured in our different age. Yet some things remain clear. The land belongs to the creator and should be held with the divine purpose clearly in mind. With this, our belonging on the land and claims over land are not about dominion but about relationship.

In the passage from the Letter to the Philippians, Paul holds out the promise of transformation, a promise taken up in the Gospel. It has a number of features, not all set out systematically. Transformation requires imitation of Christ, here and now, standing firm and in alignment with Jesus' death. Paul even puts himself up as a model! With this, there is a vision of the future: Paul eschews the earthly existence for the heavenly one, mindful of his own understanding of the eminent return of the Lord – Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus. There is reason in his stark opposition between the two realms, however within this there is also continuity. All things are subject to Christ, in whom all things were made. The contrast is drawn strongly as a way of emphasising his point about diametrically opposite behaviours: minds

occupied with earthly things as opposed to citizenship of heaven. Both are lived out in the present and offer us a Lenten meditation. Our fasting, prayer, almsgiving and good works should be bringing depth to our citizenship of heaven rather than feeding our stomachs.

There is also a *Laudato si'* reflection operative here. Paul's tempered eschatology allows us to reflect on larger issues of our use of the earth, mindful that all things belong to Christ. Our transformation as creatures and as a society cannot take place if we are voracious in our treatment of the earth, the plants, the animals, any creatures. Much of our ecological behaviour has the feel of Paul writing 'Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame".' Perhaps this Lent we are invited to stand firm for what is the Lord's.

The transfiguration presents a wonderful scene. Jesus is revealed as in glory. The figures of Moses and Elijah, both prophets who witnessed the glory of God, are here to witness the same glory in Jesus. These two were the greatest of the prophets of old, and for the early Christian communities the pair confirm that Jesus is the greatest prophet of all: he is the glory of God.

The passage has all the hallmarks expected by a Jewish audience of a revelation of divine glory. It takes place on a mountain, there is the presence of the cloud, God's voice is clear, and they are all bathed in God's glory though it is Jesus who is glorified. Jesus' transformation leaves them in silence. Yet it also leaves them aware of the fulfillment of all things in him.

From a Lenten perspective, this Gospel passage opens upon the context for the fast. Our self-denial is in the context of our glorification. There is a trace here of Irenaeus (b. 130 approx.) and his famous saying that 'the glory of God is the human person fully alive'. This was an astounding statement of confidence in creation given that his opponents, the Gnostics, were anti-body and firmly dismissive of material creation. In our present world, where the religious imagination is seeking ways to re-connect with creation as a whole, we might run alongside Pope Francis and offer that the glory of God is creation fully appreciated. This places ecological conversion at the heart of our Lenten discipline. As we take in the depth of this transformation, we are held silent before the mystery of God revealed.

Laudato si' reflects our Lenten call for transformation:

Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. The Portuguese bishops have called upon us to acknowledge this obligation of justice: 'The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next'. An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision. (*Laudato Si* 159).

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Mindful of our calling to be united as brothers and sisters, let us ask the Lord for the needs of our world and our community that we now place trustfully before the Father.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and our Church leaders in the clergy and the laity. Inspire them as we move towards the Synod on Synodality and may they consistently and continuously seek guidance and direction from the Holy Spirit.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the Plenary Council members during this period between the two Assemblies. May the work continue with openness to the prompting of the Spirit.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those preparing to become Catholics at Easter time; may they be strengthened by the examples of the congregation.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community that we may be enriched during this time of Lent with deeds of caring, kindness and inner reflection. May all we meet in our daily lives know by our actions that we are all one family in faith.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community, particularly for those who have lost their faith, are sick, lonely and fearful. In their time of suffering may they be encouraged to hold firm, continue to be hopeful and remain faithful in the Lord.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray that all those involved in Pastoral work will authentically bring ??? peace? healing? purpose? to those who are struggling to find meaning to life.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, as the descendants of Abraham we are your servants who trust in you, even in the midst of affliction, so hear this prayer that we make through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Christ, be our light. B. Farrell. 404
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 466
O Sun of Justice, fill our hearts. F C Quinn OP/ E Miller. 2
Praise to you, O Christ, our saviour. B Farrell. 407
Seek, O seek, the Lord. J McAuley/ R Connolly. 211
Tree of life. M Haugen. 307
We remember. M Haugen. 446

AOV1

Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 466
I will lift up my eyes. T. Conry. 84
Open my eyes. J. Manibusan. 166
Praise to you, O Christ, our saviour. B Farrell. 28
We remember. M Haugen 81

AOV2

Christ, be our light. B. Farrell. 3

AOV4Kids

For the faces that I know. K Bates SM. 137

CWB

Glorious in majesty. Jeff Cothran. 688
God, your glory we have seen. Didier Rimaud. 695
The glory of these forty days. Gregory the Great, tr. Maurice F. Bell. 825
The Lord is my light and my salvation. Marty Haugen. 828
There is one thing I ask of the Lord. The Grail. 837

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions

From ashes to the living font. Alan J. Hommerding. 289
The glory of these forty days. Gregory the Great, tr. Maurice F. Bell. 301
Jesus on the mountain peak. Brian Wren. 433
O raise your eyes on high and see. Ralph Wright OSB. 434
Tis good, Lord, to be here. Joseph Armitage Robinson. 435
Additional selection by Chris deSilva
Glorious in majesty. Jeff Cothran. 374

S&S1

The Lord is my light. Christopher Walker. 61

S&S2

The Lord is my light. Angus McDonell. 252
The Lord is my light and my salvation. Jesse Manibusan. 253
Transfigure us, O Lord. Bob Hurd. 309

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 26: *The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

Psalm 26: Noel Ancell. CWB 63 (stanzas 1, 3, 4, 5)

Psalm 27 (26): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 28

The Lord is my light: Tony Alonso LPC pg. 38

Music selections by Michael Mangan

You are the light (FWS) *Based on Ps 26/27* [Gathering, Gifts]

Be with us (FWS) *Based on Ps 90/91* [Gathering, Gifts]

Create a new heart (FWS) *Based on Ps 50/51* [Gathering, Gifts, Recessional]

The Lord is my light (LCC) *Ps 26 (27)* Children's Lectionary Translation

This is the time (TT) [Gathering, Recessional]

Lenten acclamation (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]

Lenten Gospel acclamation – Mass Jubilee (MJC) [Gospel Acclamation]

Turn back to God (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]



**I shall see
God's goodness
in the land of
the living.**