

Homily, Second Sunday of Lent, C Cycle, 2016 OLV & OLF, Middleburg & Delanson

**1st Reading:** Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18 [God made a covenant with Abraham, God's faithful servant]

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 27 "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

**2nd Reading:** Philippians 3:17- 4:1 [Our citizenship is in heaven & Jesus will change our lowly body to be like his glorified body]

**Gospel:** Luke 9:28-36 [Jesus went up the mountain to pray, and was transfigured]

"Gaze upon the Lord, Gaze upon his face;  
Gaze upon the one who holds you in his embrace  
Gaze upon his life; gaze upon his love;  
Gaze upon his coming poor from heaven above.

The song is from one of the letters of St. Clare. It is a description of how she prayed, and invited her sisters to pray. I think it sums up the tension between the glory of the transfiguration and the reality of the cross which Jesus knew was coming.

Jesus went to the mountain to pray, and while he was praying, his face changed. Luke is the only evangelist who says that Jesus went to the mountain to pray. Peter, John and James went with him, they gazed upon the Lord and saw Jesus as he would appear after his resurrection, but it was a preview, a trailer, not the whole movie.

Peter did not realize that when Jesus was talking about his exodus, his passage, he was talking with Moses and Elijah about his death in Jerusalem. Peter wanted to freeze the preview, and avoid the part about the cross, but Jesus wouldn't let him get away with it.

I hear in today's Gospel an invitation to pray as Jesus did. He prayed, he was transfigured, and he saw his path clearly. His prayer had real power. And so does ours.

I remember a time when someone visited me after both his parents had died within the same year. Gary was in pain, but he seldom asked anyone for help - most of his life was spent helping others.

I was not surprised that he needed someone to listen to him. But then he said, "Will you pray for me, Peter?" I was surprised that he had asked me to pray, since he is an atheist.

So I answered him, "Who to, Gary? You're an atheist." We both laughed, and then he said, "Peter, when a real believer prays, the world changes."

I told this story at his memorial service - which he had asked Sr. Anna and I to lead.

I see in the experience of Peter, James and John a promise that prayer can change my vision of the world, my life and the lives of others. So I would like to ask you:

How do you pray?

What changes have you seen in your world or in your life after faithful prayer?

Prayer, for me, is like coming to a railroad crossing with the lights flashing - as sometimes happens when I am driving to or from Mass in Delanson.

What do you do at a RR crossing? STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN.

## I STOP!

In order to really be changed by God, I have to STOP the train that rumbles on whether I want it to or not - the train of my plans, my projects, my worries, the conflicting expectations of those around me and the voices inside my head.

## I LOOK!

I take a long, loving look at the real, (that's one of the descriptions of contemplative prayer). I see both the awesome and the awful.

Our Christian tradition gives us so many forms of prayer, so many beautiful ways to gaze upon the Lord, to gaze upon his face. We all need to find the way of prayer that fits us at this stage of our lives, so we can do what St. Clare invited her sisters & brothers to do:

LOOK UPON YOUR LORD; LOOK UPON HIS WAY. LOOK UPON HIS HEART WHICH OPENS TO EACH DAY.  
THOUGH HE WAS DESPISED, THE LOWEST OF OUR RACE, LOOK UPON HIS SACRED CROSS  
WHICH BRINGS LIFE AND GRACE.

Peter looked at Jesus, and wanted to set up tents. He wanted to ignore the cross, and stay on the mountain of transfiguration. It is so easy to look at an awesome experience and to want to freeze it or bottle it.

But to do that, Peter had to avoid the other side of the Gospel, the reality of the cross. The truth of the Gospel is that we all live in the tension between the transfiguration and the cross, and there is no Easter Sunday without Good Friday. [and, likewise, there is no Good Friday without Easter Sunday].

Clare invited her sisters to look at Jesus as if they were looking into a mirror. She believed that if we Gaze at his life and his love long enough and deeply enough, we would become what we are looking at. That is the promise given to us by our Baptism, which identifies us as beloved daughters & sons of God.

It is the truth I speak when I hold up the host & the cup and say, "*Behold the body & lifeblood of Christ. See who you are, and be what you receive!*"

When I pray, I stop, I look and then, I LISTEN! I listen to God speaking through the Bible and the Liturgy. I ask the Spirit to reveal God's will to me each day. After my first cup of coffee, before I boot up my computer, I turn off the phone, and I pray,

*"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as a pathway to peace. Taking as Jesus did this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it. Trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with You in the eternal now of the resurrection."*

And then I sit in silence for 5 minutes or 20 minutes, repeating the name of Jesus as I breathe.

As a situation presents itself to me during the day, I ask, "*Lord, what do you want me to do now?*" and stop to listen for an answer.

It continues to amaze me that God consistently changes my attitudes and my perceptions, and guides me to make better choices than I would have if I did not stop, look and listen.

As Lent continues to unfold, Jesus invites all of us up to the mountain, or down to the valley to pray.

He invites all of us to **stop**, to **look** at his life and to **listen** to his word of mercy, love and truth.

He invites all of us to meet him in the Scripture we have heard today, the Eucharist we will share, and in the people we will leave with as we return to our own journey to Jerusalem.

We are called to trust in the way of Jesus, revealed by the words of St. Clare,

If you open to life's pain, then with him you shall reign  
And allow your heart to weep, then with him you'll rejoice.  
Open to his cross, the wounds of each day's love,  
Then you'll know the splendor of his kingdom above.

