

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Feb 21st 2016

I've been looking for comfort during Lent. To be more precise, I've been asking our Lord to comfort me. It is quite a change from gearing up to make some great sacrifice or to overcome some great fault or bad habit. I have those, but in this Year of Mercy, I need to be comforted, and I suspect many of us do.

I imagine that each of us is experiencing something that is difficult, at some level, perhaps on several levels. That can result in a kind of tiredness, even a spiritual tiredness. Even our lack of progress or the large number of good things we "fail to do," can discourage us. Comfort, in the form of an assurance of the Lord's love for me, is what I need now. My wounded, worn, fragile, sometimes grieving or disappointed, stretched and not very outstanding self, needs comforting from one who understands and has been accompanying me all along the way. There is nothing more comforting than being known and loved as we are. Of course, I have to grow, and Lent is a time for growth, but it is growth in intimacy with Our Lord Jesus that we need most. The beginning of the renewal of my relationship with the Lord needs - at least this year - to begin with remembering how much he loves me. My gratitude can then become a fire that draws me to pray, "Make my heart like yours."

The Transfiguration is one of those moments of comfort, which Jesus offered to his disciples, to prepare them for what is ahead. The Preface (the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer) for the Feast day of the Transfiguration (August 6th) says,

"He revealed his glory in the presence of chosen witnesses ... that the scandal of the Cross might be removed from the hearts of his disciples and that he might show how in the Body of the whole Church is to be fulfilled what so wonderfully shone forth first in its Head."

The Preface for this Sunday says,

"For after he had told the disciples of his coming Death, on the holy mountain he manifested to them his glory, to show, even by the testimony of the law and the prophets, that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection."

I need that kind of comforting in Lent. Maybe we all do. If I am renewed in a sense of Jesus' love for me and even a glimpse into the whole story, I'll be closer to being renewed than by anything I might do by my own efforts. The "whole story" is what tends to fall into the background, too often. In the midst of some messy set of things that pile up, from time to time, the powerful reality of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection seems far away. When I'm comforted to remember that, all is well. I am loved. I am forgiven. I am not alone. I will live for all eternity in that love.

With that deep renewal, I'll be better at being freer to love, to forgive, to reach out in mercy, to accompany and comfort others.

Dear Lord, Jesus, this is my desire for these days of Lent. Open my eyes to see the whole story, beginning with your love for me. Let me know that you are so present to me, as you always have been, so that I can be more present to you in these special days. I want to grow in love with you, grow in affection for you. I want to be prepared for being your disciple, your witness, your instrument. Thank

you for this Lent of comfort and fire filled grace.

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