

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Mar 20th 2011

The readings this weekend challenge us to reflect on identity and how it is revealed and expressed; Jesus' and our own. Jesus' identity is revealed through his presence with Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the Prophet as 'the Son, the Beloved the Chosen one who is to be listened to.' Peter's desire to make three tents to capture the experience is ignored; rather the disciples are commanded to keep silence until it is appropriate to reveal the truth of what they have witnessed. The other readings remind us that it is not just Jesus who is chosen. We too like Abraham and the recipients of Paul's letter to timothy are challenged to make choices in response to God's generosity even when what is offered may appear impossible.

Like Jesus we too need to be transformed and transfigured, to die to self in order to be born again. We need to be transformed. Individuals trapped by fear, clinging to attachments that give a false sense of comfort or importance, trying to be always in control with a false sense of entitlement and superiority need, through the encounter with the living God, experience themselves as free, able to be compassionate in their dealings with others, energised to use their gifts for the benefit of others. This capacity to be transformed is not something we can gain through our own efforts, it is something freely given that we can respond to by facing our fears, letting go of the things we have become attached to, serving others rather expecting to be served by them. Through being open to this identification with Christ our own inner selves can grow strong and the deeper reality of who we really are may be revealed to others.

This struggle to nurture our inner identity and to express it is not easy in a world in which the desire for fame and celebrity is the norm. Style and dress while superficial and momentary fads can easily become the focus for feeling we are acceptable and ok. The facades we create to be accepted by others unnoticeably being transformed into the traps that prevent us revealing our true selves for fear of being rejected and discarded.

Each of us needs to open our hearts and minds to receive the words addressed to Jesus, hearing them as if they are addressed to us. 'This is my chosen, the beloved' and after quietly pondering the freely given gift of God's love we need to discern how we may best respond and collaborate with the God that love's us. A failure to recognise that any desire on our part to be faithful to God is in reality evidence of an earlier choice on God's part runs the danger of us becoming workaholics, isolated, frustrated that we and others are never good enough and that there is always much more to be achieved.

Abraham despite his 75 years was prepared to trust and begin a journey which many others probably said was ridiculous for a man his age. His choice; he made not an example of bowing to peer pressure but a stepping out in faith into the mystery of the love that held and sustained him.

What is it that underpins the choices you have made in the important moments of your life; fear of what others will think or a desire to faithfully respond to God? How do you feel about those choices now? And what choices lie before you now at this point in your journey? Remembering the example of Abraham, with God it is never too late to take the risk of responding to his love with a yes.

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