

March 4, 2012
Second Sunday of Lent

God put Abraham to the test...Gen. 22:1

I must confess that this reading is one of my least favorite. The very thought of human sacrifice seems to be so repugnant. However, you and I must put this demand of God for Abraham to sacrifice his son in its proper context. It turns out, after all, that this was a test of fidelity. At this very time human sacrifice was being practiced by other pagan religions. We only have to look to our own Western Hemisphere at a much later time to discover human sacrifice being practiced by the Aztecs.

When I made a memorable visit to Chichen Itza in the Yucatan peninsula, I visited a pool where virgins were drowned to please the Aztec gods.

The fact is that the one God of Abraham desisted in his demand. So the God of Abraham stopped Abraham's sacrifice by desisting from the original demand. Nonetheless, Abraham from this experience showed himself completely loyal and obedient to the One God.

The Gospel: Every morning when I awaken, I can look out the window and see Camelback Mountain. Every mountain is in some sense an icon of the power and majesty of God. So have you noticed that almost all the most significant events of the life of Jesus took place on mountains?

The Sermon on the Mount
Today's Transfiguration
Mount Calvary

It was so for Moses and for the prophets. So it is no surprise that Jesus would commune with Moses on a mountain top.

The apostles knew Jesus day by day as another first century Jewish man. He sweated in the heat; he got dirty in the desert; he went to the bathroom just as they did. He was both ordinary and extraordinary.

In the carpenter shop, he got slivers, and in the desert his skin was baked by the sun and sometimes scratched and bleeding from the cactus.

But on the mountain, they see something entirely different. They get a glimpse of glory. They will need to remember this glimpse of glory for another day will come on another mountain when they will see Jesus bloodied, suffering, and dying.

In our common parlance and culture, we call some celebrities "stars." They glow and glimmer in their spotlights. A modern folk opera has named: Jesus Christ Super-Star. Yes! On the Mountain of Transfiguration, Jesus did glow as Jesus-Super-Star!

Today, all around us we know human beings on beds of pain, slumped over on their wheel chairs in care centers, mumbling quite often, "Take me home!" We view human degradation in many forms. Despite all this, today's Gospel Good News assures us that there is glory beyond degradation.

Jesus Christ has died;
But Jesus Christ IS Raised;
And Jesus Christ will come again!

Transfiguration is our destiny. Transfiguration is a hint of resurrection. Botox only takes us so far. The day does come when ugliness falls upon us. Lent reminds us: *Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.*

Like the apostles we long for something better.

Saint Paul in today's second reading assures us of a better future:

"Brothers and Sisters, if God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all, how will he not give us everything else along with him?"

The special preface for this Sunday sums it up very well:

*"For after he had told the apostles 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 Resurrection."*

Breakfast Conversation: Do we need transfiguration moments in our own life experience?

Personal Reflection: What has been a transfiguring experience for me?