

"SO HOW IS YOUR SUNDAY GOING?"  
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

So how is your Lent going? I had a rough first week. It got to the point where I wanted to ask my doctor for a prescription for chocolate. You don't have to give up medicine for Lent!

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Today's first reading strikes the ear of the modern listener as outrageous. How could God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son? What kind of a God would demand human sacrifice? But we have to take into account the whole story. God never intended Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. God always planned to tell Abraham to stop. God provided the ram that was to be offered up. Abraham had great faith that God would fulfill the covenant he had made. For Christians, the story of the "test of Abraham" is a foreshadowing of God offering his only Son. What God asked of Abraham - but did not require him to go through with - God was willing to do with his Son Jesus. Jesus became the sacrifice - offered in the place of the human race - that ratifies a new and everlasting covenant between God and humanity.

St. Paul reflects upon the depth of this sacrifice in today's second reading: "He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all - how will he not also give us everything along with him."

The "everything" that God gives us is eternal life and the grace-filled living that leads us there.

The Transfiguration of Jesus reveals him as the Word of God, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

He is the answer to all the promises made by God throughout the Old Testament. Through the Transfiguration God gives us Jesus as both our teacher and our companion on the way when he tells us: "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Finally, the Transfiguration holds the promise of our own transformation through Christ. Our life is transfigured through the presence of Christ in his Word, the Eucharist, in our communion with each other, in our prayer time, in our acts of charity, and in our penances and suffering.

As I have said before, Lent is a time to do with greater fervor all these things which we as Christians should be doing throughout the whole year.

Peter suggested building three tents ... perhaps he wanted to somehow "capture" or at least prolong the experience on the mountain.

However, as the disciples had to come down the mountain, so you and I cannot stay here in church.

We have to go out into the world announcing what we have seen and heard.

Pope Francis wrote: "Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence."

Lent can and should be a very personal experience, but that is only one dimension of it ... Lent is also communal as we journey together toward Easter.

As we ourselves are being transfigured by this holy season, we are called to transfigure the world.

The disciples coming down the mountain didn't understand what "rising from the dead" meant.

But you and I do, both in the Resurrection of Jesus, and in the hope and joy Jesus brings even in the midst of the trials of daily life.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Our hope gives us the courage to love courageously, just as God has loved us.