

## Second Sunday of Lent

We could say that the experience of Jesus being transfigured on the mountain was a taste of what lay ahead for him when, after his resurrection, he would take up again the glory that belonged to him as God. It was an experience that was shared with three of his closest disciples. That they were there with Jesus allows us to be there too. With Peter, James and John, we experience the real Jesus. In seeing Jesus in his glory, we see what we shall become with him.

As in any of the gospel stories we are invited to enter more deeply into the story by pondering the images that are being used. Jesus takes us up a high mountain. We can always see a lot more on the top of the mountain. It is where we might even see God. It was on the mountain of Moriah that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son to God as we saw in today's reading from the Book of Genesis. Moses and Elijah are there with Jesus reminding us of how God has spoken to his people in the past through the Law and the Prophets. In a land that was so dependent upon regular rainfall clouds became signs of life and hope. Since God is the source of life and the ground for our hope clouds became symbols of God's presence among us. On the mountain of today's story, we become lost in the cloud of God's presence. And God speaks to us from the cloud. "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

Mark is a master of drama. Immediately after the Father spoke from the cloud we read, "Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus. The wonderful experience of the glory of God is taken from them. It is the Jesus with whom they are familiar that they can see now.

But the mystery deepens as they make their way down from the mountain. They are told not to tell anyone about what they had seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. But they didn't really know what this meant. Jesus was about to tell them that before he could rise from the dead, before he could come to share the glory that they had just seen, he was going to be rejected, betrayed and die a horrible death.

There is a message for us in all this too. We are on a journey with Jesus. That journey will come to a glorious end when we will be with Jesus in heaven. But like Jesus we will only enjoy the glory of heaven after we have lived our life here on earth with all its joys and struggles, with all its limitations and possibilities, until we too die. We will only be ready to experience the fullness of God's love for us when we have learnt something of what loving means. We will only be ready to let God embrace us in God's loving arms when we have grown out of our selfishness and opened our arms to embrace

others. We can only do that with the love and support of others.

My sister and brother-in-law who live in Melbourne, sold their house last Saturday. They are moving into a retirement village. But they were able to find a retirement village not far from where they live now. They were very pleased about that because Barry can still play golf at the local golf course and Marg can continue to help out at Vinnies. Both of them can still be part of the Parish that made them very welcome when they moved to Melbourne nearly fifty years ago.

The efforts that we make to connect with our fellow parishioners are life giving for us and for them. When we share our stories we discover where God is working in the lives of each of us. As we get to know each other we can begin to share our struggles and our joys. We learn how we can respectfully support each other. As members of the Church we know that becoming disciples of Jesus takes a lifetime and is not all plain sailing. But today's gospel helps us to see the bigger picture. It helps us to know where we are going. The words that God spoke from the cloud help us to know how to get there. "This my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him."

There will be times when we get discouraged. Most of us will get lost many times. But St. Paul today gives us a word of encouragement. He knows that the road can be challenging but he wants us to know that we are never alone. "With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain that after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give." Let's open our hearts to what God may want to give us today.