

2nd Sunday of Lent (C)
(Genesis 15:5-12.17-18 / Luke 9:28-36)
21.02.2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

As you have probably noticed, the Sunday Eucharist readings follow a three year cycle, which means that the same readings come back every three years.

Every year, on the second Sunday of Lent, in the first reading, we meet with **Abraham**, and we read one of the three accounts of the **Transfiguration**. Abraham and the Transfiguration will be the two points of focus for our meditation today.

Abraham occupies a central place in salvation history. On the second Sunday of Lent two years ago, we heard the account of Abraham's call; last year we read about the sacrifice of Abraham, the great test of his faith; this year we have just heard the account of the covenant that God concluded with Abraham.

In this account, it is the faith of Abraham and his trust in God that are brought to the fore.

Abraham is old and childless, yet he puts his faith in the Lord who promises an innumerable posterity to him: "Look up to heaven", God says to Abraham, "and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants". The promise and the assurance of marvellous things to come are based on the recollection of the marvellous things God has already accomplished: "I am the Lord", God said to Abraham, "who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to make you heir to this land". In the past God had asked Abraham to leave his country and had promised to give him a land. Where we meet Abraham today God had given him this land. Now, God promises Abraham a posterity which He will give to him in his own time and in his own way. Our hope for the future is founded upon our trust in what has happened in the past. How important it is for us to remember the blessings of the Lord already received in the past! How important for us to keep the memory of the fulfilment of the Lord's promises in the past, as we look at the present moment and to the future with serenity and hope! This gives us faith in the Lord's promises.

The example of the trust and hope of Abraham, our father in faith, is a precious example for our lives today. The Risen Lord made this promise to his Church, to each one of us: "I am with you always". How could the Lord forget his Church? How could he forget us?

Our diocese of Dromore, like many other dioceses in Europe, has nobody in training for the priesthood. The Risen Lord has promised to be with his Church always. The Lord knows that his Church needs priests. Let us continue to pray for vocations with faith and hope. The Lord will provide.

The Lord created our relatively young community. He blessed us and continues to bless us. We wait for new members to continue our mission. They will come in the Lord's own time, because he is faithful to his promises.

On the eve of his passion, the Lord prayed for the unity of all those who will believe in Him. We desire and pray for the visible unity of the Church so that the world may believe. There is no doubt that the Lord will give unity to his Church in his own way, in his own time. Even if the Lord seems to delay, we have to persevere in prayer. We shall not be disappointed.

The Lord promised us to give us his peace and has already begun to give it to us. But our world still longs for, still craves for peace. We need the Lord's peace more than ever in our own age and

generation. Let us persevere in prayer: the Lord will give us his peace, a peace that the world cannot give itself.

The Lord promised to be with us always. We could expand our thought. We could think of childless couples, unemployed persons, people who are gravely ill... Rightly we believe that the Lord will intervene in these situations or at least will give us the grace of inner freedom to cope with all these trials. At the end, what really matters is the love of God for each one of us, whatever the human situation in which we find ourselves. God's love for each one of us is the source of the happiness we long for. Our true identity is that we are a beloved child of God. Our achievements are secondary and will never be able to replace what we really need: God's love for us. Our achievements will never match what we really are: a beloved child of God.

What the old man Abraham thought impossible happened to Him by God's grace. There is nothing impossible to God, nothing unthinkable for God and for those who believe in Him. Who among us would have thought that one day Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness would work together and develop a friendship? Who among us would have thought that Pope Francis would meet Patriarch Kyril of Moscow?

The spiritual attitude of Abraham – his unflinching faith, his absolutely confident trust – which is proposed to our meditation today is a real source of hope for us. Let us dare to believe that the Lord is with us always. Even if he seems to delay, at the end we shall not be disappointed. The Lord will fulfil his promises. We have just to be patient and persevere.

Now a word about the Transfiguration! This year, we read the narrative of the Transfiguration in Luke's gospel. Luke is the only one of the three synoptic gospels who underlines that the Transfiguration happened while Jesus was praying. "Jesus took with Him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain **to pray. As he prayed**, the aspect of his face was changed..." The emphasis on prayer is not surprising in Luke's gospel which is well-known as the gospel of prayer.

As Jesus prayed, his disciples looked at Him and were introduced to the mystery of his person: they were led to enter into it.

"His clothing became brilliant as lightning": Jesus' transfiguration was for the three disciples a foretaste of His Resurrection. They saw his glory.

The disciples saw Jesus enjoying a friendship with Moses and Elijah. They realised how much Jesus is really the revelation of the God of Israel, the Messiah announced and awaited by the prophets. Jesus is the fulfilment of the tradition of Israel.

As they looked to Jesus, his disciples were filled with wonder. For them it was heaven on earth! This event was a gift and a gift all about life. The disciples went through the temptation of wanting to put their hands on the event and hold on to it for them: "Let us make three tents..." But we cannot put our hands upon life and hold it captive. Life is a gift that we have to receive and share and allow to go its way.

Finally the disciples heard a voice from heaven, the voice of the Father, telling them that Jesus was his beloved Son, the chosen one, whom we are all invited to listen to. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh whom we have to heed and pay attention to. We are to listen to his words and learn from his deeds.

One of the lessons of the Transfiguration narrative for us is that prayer is the act by which we can discover the truth of every human being and of every event we encounter in life. Through prayer, in the presence of the Lord, we see persons and events as the Lord sees them. We recognize Christ's presence in them. In prayer we can pray for people that prayer which pleases the Father. We can ask for them what they really need and what God is ready to give them. Prayer is the act by which we listen to God as he tells us that we are his beloved child. Prayer is the act by which we look at our neighbour and see in him or her a beloved child of God.

During this Lenten season, let us come back to the Lord in prayer, especially solitary prayer wherein the Lord reveals himself to us and reveals others to us as they truly are: as his children, our brothers and sisters. As we pray, let us wait for the fulfilment of the promises of the Lord with faith and hope. The Lord is faithful to his promises. Amen.