

2nd Sunday of Lent

Every year we have, in all three years of the liturgical cycle, the Gospel story of the Transfiguration on the second Sunday of Lent. This year we have Mark's version.

Genesis 22:1-2. 9-13. 15-18

Abraham is the great Old Testament figure of faith. At the age of seventy-five he answered the call of God and set off for an unknown land.

Romans 8:31-34

Paul poses questions: "With God on our side who can be against us?" "When God acquits, could anyone condemn?" The answer is "No!"

Mark 9:2-10

For the second time in the Gospels, at Jesus' transfiguration, the voice of the Father informs the disciples that Jesus is the Father's beloved Son and adds, "Listen to him."

Reflection

"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him".

Soon after Jesus' first prediction of his passion and death, he took three of his disciples up a mountain and gave them a glimpse of his future glory. It was on a mountain that God was revealed to Moses, the liberator and Law-giver, and to Elijah, the great prophet. The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of the Transfiguration was a revelation that Jesus was the new liberator and the new prophet, showing the unity and continuity of God's redeeming work. Peter was awestruck and proposed to set up three tents (such as ones the Israelites lived in, on their journey to the Promised Land). A cloud overshadowed them all, reminiscent of the 'shekinah' or 'glory of God' that filled the tent in the wilderness (Ex 40:35). The voice of God confirmed Jesus' divine authority. His words must be heard and obeyed. Jesus' crucifixion was the opening up of the divine heart so that we could see that no sin of ours could finally separate us from the love of God.

A challenge of faith: Can we **honestly** believe in the enormity of God's love for us – can we **really** appreciate God's **faithful love** for us – &, what's more, can we **accept** that love.

As Jesus begins his public ministry, he is, in the Transfiguration, comforted by a reassuring voice, a voice of love from the heavens; it tells him he is the beloved of his Father. It's a moment of truth, a moment of **transfiguration**.

This gives him the strength he needs to continue his journey; that journey that will lead to the cross and to death. In our own lives too, we need to **know** the love that God has for us. We need to be reminded that we've been created by him; that we've been chosen in love.

"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him".



As we move on in these 40 days of Lent, I'd like, today, to give a sort of image of that love that might give a direction to Lent:

1st a poem - then a story.

The Poem:

When Jesus came to Golgotha,
They hanged him on a tree.
They drove great nails
Through hands and feet,
And made a Calvary.

They crowned him with a crown of thorns,
Red were his wounds and deep:

For those were crude and cruel days,
And human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham
They simply passed him by.
They never hurt a hair of him,
They only let him die.

For men had grown more tender,
And they would not give him pain;
They only just passed down the street
And left him in the rain.

Still, Jesus cried, "Forgive them,
For they know not what they do."
And still it rained a winter rain
That drenched him through and through.

The crowds went home and left the streets,
Without a soul to see.
And Jesus crouched against the wall,
And cried for Calvary.

The point is: people's indifference, coldness, unconcern, can be even worse than the active hostility which nailed him to the cross.

And so Jesus wept.

The story?

This story comes from a man called Walter Wangerin. He tells a story about his little son Matthew. One day, his father says, he went to son's room and found him sitting on bed with whole load of comics all round him. He said to Matthew, "Where did you get the comics from?" Matthew, "I took them out of the library." "You took them from the library?" "Yes." "You mean you stole them from the library?" "Yes." So, his father phoned the librarian and said he was going to march his son down with comics, to apologize and give them back. That's exactly what he did and the librarian gave Matthew a little lecture about stealing.



The following summer: they were on holiday in a little country village with only one shop. When got back home, his father happened to go into Matthew's room and found a pile of comics in the drawer of his dressing table. Matthew said, "I stole them from the shop this summer." So, his father took the comics and took Matthew downstairs and he lit a fire in the fireplace. Then he threw the comic into the

flames, one by one. and with each comic that he threw into the fire, he reminded little Matthew of the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." "Thou shalt not steal."

A year later, Matthew again stole some comics. This time his father told him that he was going to have to spank him. He put him over his knee, and gave him 5 slaps with his hand. Why 5? He felt that if he gave any less, he would be too soft and if he was really angry he might give too many, so he limited himself to 5. When he'd done that he sat Matthew down. He could see his son's head hanging down; obvious Matthew was trying not to cry in front of his father.

The father realised that, and not wanting to see little Matthew cry, he said, "Matthew, I'm going to leave you alone for a while, but I'll be back in a few minutes." After he gone out of the room and closed the door, the father himself began to cry and began to cry really hard. After while he went up to bathroom and washed his face and went back and talked to his little son Matthew.

Years later: Matthew by now a teenager: and he and his mother were driving back from the shops. As often happens, they were reminiscing. and they got round to those early days when Matthew was a young rascal stealing comics. and Matthew said to his mother, "You know, after that incident with Dad, I really never stole anything again." and his mother said, "I suppose the reason was because your father spanked you." "Oh, no Mum," replied Matthew, "it was because when he went out of the room I could hear him crying."

Anyway, remember that poem and that story sometimes during Lent: It will give you a sort of focus: The image they both leave us with, is simply **Jesus Crying**.

In the gospels, do you remember when Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem and wept. “Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” he cried; “how often I would have gathered you as a mother hen gathers her chicks, but you would not.” Jesus wept too over his friend Lazarus, over his death, over what death did to Lazarus’ sisters and to the neighbours; what it did to the whole village. On the night before he died he said, “I no longer call you servants but friends,” and when one of those friends betrayed him, it’s not hard to feel, not only the pain in his voice, but also the tear in his eyes, as he said, “Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a **kiss**?”



I suggest this image of the **Weeping Christ** could be our image for Lent. What we do for Lent, what we give up, not for its own sake, not just for our own self-improvement. What we do—the good deeds, the extra prayers we say, the sacrifices—they’re all meant to help us have a **deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ**. To know him better; to get to know him well. and that’s why an image of Jesus Weeping is important. It puts him at the centre of our Lent, as a friend and as someone who loves us – someone who cares enough to be **hurt** by what his friends do. Jesus is susceptible, vulnerable, because of his love for us. When we betray him, it can reduce him to tears.

Jesus weeps over our version of stealing comics. He doesn’t like what it is making us become - he doesn’t like how we are hurting other people..

And remember that, like Walter Wangerin, Jesus cries, not because of disgust with his son - but out of love.



May he support us all the day long,
Till the shades lengthen
and the evening comes
and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.

Then, in his mercy may he give us
a safe lodging,
and a holy rest,
and peace at the last.

Cardinal St John Henry Newman