February 25, 2018

Second Sunday of Lent

Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18
Rom 8:31b-34
Mk 9:2-10

By Domenico Di Raimondo, MSpS

The Lenten Season of 2018 began 11 days ago. It is a spiritual journey that prepares us to celebrate the great Easter mysteries of Jesus passion, death and resurrection. Members of the church of all ages, vocations and genders, fix their eyes on Jesus to see him more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly, day by day.

Following our brother Albert Einstein’s intuition that imagination is more important than knowledge, I invite you to allow yourself to engage your imagination to penetrate the message of this 2nd Sunday of Lent. In the first reading and the gospel, we find two fathers, two sons and one promise.

Two fathers.
In the first reading, our imagination can see old Abraham’s heart pounding strong and his mind wondering beyond, thinking as he is asked to offer his only son in sacrifice, and as he ponders his relationship with God, with Isaac, with Sarah and recalls the promises God had made. Yet, he is willing to embrace the mysterious plan of the God he loves above all.

Theology debates while reflecting upon the suffering of the eternal and powerful God and yet, if we take seriously what Jesus said to his disciples, whoever sees me sees the Father, our believing imagination cannot but be in awe as we remember Jesus tears upon Jerusalem, his commotion at the sight of the poor, the orphan, the women, the sinners of his time. What eternal feelings surface on the Father’s heart as He is always present to His only Son, the son of Mary, who moves forward, anointed by the Spirit, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, and who faces approval, rejection and doubt among the religious leaders, his fellow citizens and even his disciples and who is about to undergo passion and death.

Two sons.
As we continue to use our imagination, we can see Isaac, Abraham and Sarah’s only son, questioning his father about the victim for the holocaust. The faithful and difficult response from this father, most probably became puzzling and even disturbing, when he sees his own father ready to offer him in sacrifice! Then, as a miracle, and we can imagine the reaction of both father and son, when, later, they see and hear God’s messenger pronouncing words of deliverance and hope.
Upon another mountain, we see the Son of God and the son of Mary confirming his willingness to undergo his passion. Then, as an affirmation and a confirmation, together with his disciples, He hears the voice of the Father proclaiming, once again, that he is the beloved Son.

One promise.
If Abraham, because he did not withhold his only beloved son was given descendants countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore, for Jesus obedience, all women and men are now saved, because if God is for us, who can be against us? Our lives, as Jesus himself, are called to transfiguration!

One Challenge.
How can we speak of transfiguration and affirm that if God is for us, who can be against us when we continue to see that many among us are losing their medical benefits, our cities house many sisters and brothers who do not have a home, young Dreamers live in anxiety for their future, people in office look at their wellbeing more than at the wellbeing of their nation, thousands of Salvadorians, among others, face deportation, the streets of many cities are in ruins because there is war, and millions of refugees of all ages fly out of their countries and cannot meet their basic needs?

Today’s readings invite us to turn our eyes to disciples like Dorothy Day, Theresa of Calcutta, Martin Luther King and Oscar Romero, Katharine Drexel, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Stanley Rother and Salomis Casey who believed that transfiguration was possible, by the gift of their own lives for the sake of the Kingdom.

Let us remember that imagination is more important than knowledge, and let us pray the Holy Spirit to enable us to be Jesus’ disciples here and now Let us engage our lives beyond the boundaries of what might appear as reasonable, so that transfiguration of our reality and the people around us, may take place in our times.

Ordained in 1978, Domenico Di Raimondo, MSpS, has has served in the fields of parish ministry, formation and leadership, and is the current Director of the House of Prayer for Priests in Orange, CA.