

## **2ND SUNDAY OF LENT (B)**

### **THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, LISTEN TO HIM**

What is the difference between hearing and listening? I may hear you speak but I may not listen to you. Abraham was called by God; he heard Him speak and the message was that he was to sacrifice his only begotten son. Abraham listened and obeyed and was ready to do what he was told.

When Jesus was baptised by John, the heavens opened and the voice of His Father was heard, "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on Him," (Mt. 3:17). The same message was heard from the Father when He told the disciples to listen to Him. Why were they to listen to Him? Because He is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, as once Philip told Nathaniel, "We have found Him whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote, Jesus Son of Joseph, from Nazareth," (Jn. 1:45). Moses represents the Law, and Elijah represents the Prophets.

The Transfiguration was to assure the disciples that the sufferings are not going to last forever. The glory to be revealed was greater than the suffering, as St Paul told the Romans; "In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us," (Rom. 8:18).

What is Jesus saying that we have to listen to? Are the things we are being told to do too much for us? Abraham was to sacrifice his only son; was it too much? Yes in my eyes, but no in the eyes of God, because God knew what He was going to do, but also He was going to do more than that for us, that is, giving us His only Son to die for us. So there is the need to listen to Him and obey Him.

All the things we are told to do at this time are what we experience from God and He wants us to practice in a very special way. He wants us to show love, because He has first loved us. He wants us to sacrifice our lives for His sake; and He has done that for us and continues to do. We are to offer God the best of our lives, and we shall get everything back as Abraham got his son back and many descendants as well. What is the best thing in my life that God will be pleased to have presented to Him?

The message from Jesus is, "If someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well, and if anyone requires you to go one mile, go two miles with him," (Mt. 5:40-41). He asks for the heart because from there comes all that defiles us. We have heard it but do we listen? "Do

not deceive yourselves by just listening to His word; instead, put it into practice, anyone who looks steadily at the perfect law of freedom and keeps to it - not listening and forgetting, but putting it into practice - will be blessed in every undertaking," (Jam.1:22; 25). If the servants did not listen to what Jesus told them to do, the wedding at Cana might have been a disaster. As the Father tells us to listen to His Beloved Son, Mary also tells us to do whatever He tells us.

Abraham went to the mountain to offer his son Isaac; Moses went to the mountain to receive the Law, and Elijah also encountered the Lord on Mount Horeb. Jesus took the three disciples to the mountain to encounter the two great men and also to meet His Father. The Israelites knew that it was on the mountain that they encountered the Lord and spoke to them through the clouds. Where can we meet the Lord? To go to the mountain also? He is available in the Church, in our homes, and wherever two or three are gathered in His name. He also speaks to others in many ways, and we have to pay attention to hear His voice and act on it.

"Lord, I know you speak to me in countless ways. You preach through the Scriptures, Your Church and in my life of prayer. Help me to heed your voice and accept all you say with perfect obedience and submission. I love You, my dear Lord, and I repent of my sin. Jesus, I trust in You, Amen".

## **1ST SUNDAY OF LENT (B)**

### **THE START OF A NEW LIFE IN THE LORD**

God created the world to be good, but the devil disrupted it and had a chance to rule. God, being the Master of all things destroyed the world and begun a new world with Noah and his family. The waters of the flood wiped away evil. After the flood the Lord God made a covenant with Noah, not to destroy the world again with water.

St. Peter reminds us that the flood is a symbol of our baptism. We are told that only eight people survived the deluge. We have been washed clean through our baptism, and it is not bodily washing but spiritual bath. It is an appeal to God for a clear conscience. During our baptism we have also made a covenant with the Lord to be His children and He our God; to start a new life in Him.

There are certain questions to ask at this time, even though we are all aware that it is time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving. I have to know how sinful or holy I am. During our baptism, we passed through the flood and the old order was wiped out and we became a new creation. Have I been faithful to my baptismal promises, or have I thrown them to the winds? How white is the white garment given me? How bright is my light that was given to shine for others to see the way to the Lord? And how have I lived my universal priesthood of Christ? I have become a member of the body of Christ sharing in one faith and one Spirit; but am I a faithful member of this body?

Do I want to start a new life in the Lord? What do I have to change in my life to make me a better person in the eyes of God? What is wrong with me? Life comes with many challenges and temptations from every where. Where do my tests come from? Can I identify them? Do they come from within me? Or from home, or work place, or school, or friends? Do they bother me or are they just some of those things which we experience and so no need to worry about them?

Jesus was led by Spirit into the desert but He was tempted by the devil. This means that the devil is with us and after us. "Personal sanctity is not a guarantee against being tempted. It was during fasting and prayer that Jesus was tempted. In the same way the saints were tempted by the devil in so many ways to distract them from pursuing holiness.

We might have failed in so many ways and given in to the dictates of the devil, but there is hope because in His body, Christ has defeated satan and has given us the chance of regaining our dignity as children of God. This is possible if we heed to His call to repentance as we heard in the gospel. We were told on Wednesday that we should repent and believe the Good News, because we are dust and to dust we shall return. I am always reminded of this any time I preside over a funeral of a cremated remains. I say to myself, if the body is like that, then what about the lost soul? It will be more miserable.

There are so many mistakes we have made in our lives, being financial, business, even marriage, work, education, friendship, and many more, which may be very difficult to correct. But in our spiritual lives, God can help us make a new start, no matter how old or young we are. He can make us new people if we are ready to repent. He sets before us life and prosperity, and if we choose them we shall live.