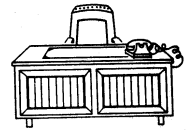


2nd Sunday of Lent

March 17, 2019



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Sunday Reflection:

The first reading presents us with an account of a remarkable covenant between God and Abraham. The covenant is typical of the ancient covenant practice of cutting animals in half and placing the halves opposite each other, creating a pathway. The parties to a covenant would walk through the pathway. It is a dramatic way of saying if one breaks the covenant, let happen to those animals happen to them. It is remarkable that God would enter a Covenant with Abraham in such a dramatic fashion.

Faith is a necessary condition (*conditio sine qua non*) for covenant with God. We know that God is trusted to keep his side of a covenant, but we cannot say the same of humans. Fortunately, Abram's faith was strong enough to enter into a covenant with God, trusting in the fulfillment of the promises made. Likewise, Lent presents an excellent opportunity to re-examine our faith and covenant with God, taking advantage of the conversion *mantra*. Making the best of Lent also entails ensuring the unrelenting call for repentance does not lead to boredom.

In the second reading, St. Paul tearfully and lovingly reprimands those members of the Philippine community who were conducting themselves as enemies of the cross. Embracing the cross is an essential part of the Lenten experience. Through his paschal mystery, Christ transformed an instrument of torture into a means of salvation. Often one has to choose between the difficult way of the cross and the easy way of the world. St. Paul states that those who are preoccupied with worldly wealth, power and glory make themselves enemies of the cross.

St. Paul also reminds the community that their citizenship is in heaven from where they await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. As we journey through Lent, we ought to be cognizant that our true citizenship is in heaven. We cannot afford to spend so much energy pursuing elusive wealth, power, and honor to the detriment of our spiritual wellbeing. There is nothing wrong with hard work and success so long as one does not sacrifice one's integrity in the process.

The gospel presents the transfiguration narrative from Luke's gospel. The narrative is actually found in all three synoptic gospels (Matt 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-8; and Luke 9:28-36). In this Sunday's narrative, Jesus went up the mountain (believed to be Mt. Tabor) to pray with a select few of his apostles – Peter, James and John. That prayer session quickly turned into something otherworldly as they witnessed his transfiguration. The presence of Moses and Elijah points to Jesus' connection with Israel's past as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

The transfiguration was an awesome moment of revelation, wrapped in theophany. As was the case during his baptism, the heavens opened, and apostles heard the Father's voice introducing his Son to the world. We could also sense the presence of the Holy Spirit represented by the cloud. One might wonder why God revealed his Son's glory to the Apostles this way. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that it strengthened the Apostles for the cross through a glimpse of the Resurrection. The transfiguration is so highly regarded as to be included among the newly established "Luminous Mysteries" by Pope John Paul II, in 2002.

Have a great week! Fr. Romanus