

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY
Second Sunday of Lent, March 13, 2022

This Lenten Season is about change. We all have this hope of changing to be more like Jesus. This is why we Pray, Fast and Do Almsgiving. Remember, the key to all this is love. As Mother Teresa reminds us, it is not how much we pray, it is how much love you put into your prayer. It is not about fasting, but how much love you offer yourself to your fasting. It is not how much you give in almsgiving, but how much love you put into your giving. If we have entered into the Lenten season with this in mind, then God's love and grace is changing us, and will change us.

Changing and conforming ourselves into being more like Jesus, this is our Lenten goal. As I say this, I am very much aware of what is going on inside of me, and where I need God's grace. I like the practice of the Daily Examen from St. Ignatius of Loyola that helps to create greater awareness of the movement of God's spirit within. And it creates a greater awareness of what to avoid in my life that leads me away from God and that which is contrary to His Spirit within.

Once you begin to put this into practice into your life, then the Sacrament of Confession becomes a welcomed experience of God's mercy. God's mercy in us makes us better, makes us who we are and who we are called to be. It is also good to remember what St. Augustine said, "*our hearts are restless until they rest in thee O God!*" So if we find ourselves restless and feeling like something is missing, then we have to look no farther than within ourselves during this Lenten season.

What we need to do is to listen to God, listen to Jesus. This Second Sunday of Lent we hear of this power of change that happens when we listen to God. The Covenant of Abraham and the Transfiguration story reveals the gift of what can happen when we listen to God.

In Genesis it is amazing that Abraham, our father in faith, listened to God with so little revelation. But look what happened when he did. God blessed him in this covenant relationship with many descendants, as many as the stars in sky and sand on the seashore. He listened to God in prayer all day. Abraham is the Father of all Christians, all those of the Jewish and Islam faith. Abraham is our Father in Faith, who teaches us to listen to God.

Lent started with us in the desert. Where Jesus listened to His Father, followed where the Spirit led. Now we find Him on the mountain, praying as He heads to Jerusalem for the last time. And during this time of prayer, while He was listening, God the Father blessed Him to experience what is soon to happen - the Glory of the Resurrection. All we are asked to do, along with Peter, James, and John, is to listen to Him. This is my chosen Son, **Listen to Him**. Jesus is the fulfillment of the

Prophets - Elijah and the Law - Moses. There is no one else we are called to Listen to, Listen to Jesus.

God didn't want the experience of his followers to remain on the mountain. He wanted His glory to live within their hearts. They would not understand this experience now, but later once they experienced the power of Jesus resurrection, then they would find this gift within themselves. This is where we are called to find the power and light of Jesus, within ourselves.

And this Lent calls us to listen, to listen to Jesus. The only way this happens is when we find the time to be with Jesus. In quiet, away from TV, phone, computer, away from our many distractions. Then we can listen more clearly to the words of God that have the power to change hearts.

In praying with Psalm 27, *"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom should I fear? The Lord is my refuge whom I should be afraid."* This is the Responsorial Psalm for today. In my second year of the seminary, I seriously thought about leaving. I was stressed out, and I was assigned to teach a Confirmation class at St. Mark's in Plano Texas. There were over 400 to be confirmed that year. I had a class of 25, none of whom wanted to be there. It was a challenging experience for me all year. I felt like I had failed. Three months into teaching, I decided I was done, no more. I went to talk to my supervisor, but he was busy. So I went to the chapel to talk to Jesus. In front of me was a bible. I picked it up, opened to one of the markers, and it opened to Psalm 27. I started to read it and then I heard the Lord, *"John, am I not the Lord of Life, your Light and Salvation?"* I said *"Yes, Lord."* *"Then why are you afraid? John, am I not the refuge of your life?"* *"Yes, Lord."* *"Then why are you afraid?"* In this short moment, the Lord changed my heart and mind, and I left, got my class notes, and headed out to the Dallas traffic. I think I kicked out 3-4 students that night for disrupting the class. Again, I felt like a complete failure and was very relieved when it was over.

Two years later I get a call from one of my former student's mother. She was in a rehab hospital. She could have one visitor or a chaplain to visit with her, she asked for me. I was surprised. I went to see her every week while she was there. Into my third visit, I asked her, *"Why did you asked for me?"* She then went on to tell me everything I said in one of my classes that gave her a glimmer of hope. She said, *"I am holding onto that hope that God will save me"*. I gave thanks to God all the way back to the seminary.

God is always full of surprises once we put our trust in Him. I no longer felt like a failure, and thank God for this grace moment. I am in awe of God's grace and power to change lives, especially mine. It all happened because a heart was listening to Jesus.