

## Bishop's Reflection – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Lent

As Christians we read the old Testament with our eyes on the New. The story of Abraham's offering is no different. On first hearing the story, on how he is asked to offer his only son Isaac, we might bristle at the thought. "How could God even ask such a thing?" This, even though God would pull Abraham away from the brink at the last second. This is especially true of parents, who could not even begin to contemplate the initial idea, the journey and the actual preparation leading up to the sacrifice. But, later on we are told, as Christians, "this is what God is willing to do for you."

St. Paul's letter to the Romans offers its own reflection on God's gift of his Only Begotten Son, "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?" (Romans 8: 31-32) And later, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Romans 8: 35, 37)

Sometimes we even catch a glimpse of God's great love for us. Even though many of us may know it in our heads, we often lack the insight to see it in our lives. That's what the Story of the Transfiguration is all about. Together with Peter, James and John, we are led up a high mountain, a mountain not unlike the one Abraham was asked to climb, a mountain not unlike the one on which Jesus died; "And He was transfigured before them." They saw Him for who He was. They also caught a glimpse of the fulness of His love. How they longed to stay on that mountain. How they longed to stay in that moment of insight. How we wish to hang on to those moments, too. When we behold God for who He is, and how much He values us; but, soon, it recedes into memory, and we must draw on it, so as not to lose hope in times of trial.

"This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" We have heard a similar statement once before in Mark's Gospel. It came at the time of Jesus' Baptism. Then it was addressed to, and heard by, Jesus alone, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Now it is addressed to us, "Behold my Son", "Behold my love, be attentive to what He will say and do". The Father's words point us directly to what Jesus will do for us in and through his passion and death; they also point us to His victory over sin and death through His resurrection from the dead.

We have a similar mountain top experience each time we go to Mass. Many of us may not see the Mass this way, but it is true; each Sunday Jesus takes us up a high mountain, away from the busy-ness of our daily tasks, and He is transfigured before us. No longer ordinary bread and wine, but His own Body and Blood; no longer a pittance in size and quantity, but nothing less than God's offering in His Only Begotten Son, once offered on the cross. Have we ever said with Peter, "It is good for us to be here"? This is truly a blessed moment, an experience of the love of God revealed. "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to Him [be attentive to Him]!" We would be foolish not to.