

2nd Sunday of Lent (C)
(Genesis 15:5-12.17-18 / Luke 9:28-36)
16.03.2025
See

If we turn our attention to what is happening in the world at the present time, we see images of violence and war, political leaders behaving like bullies and children, women and men threatened by mass deportation or living in refugee camps.

During our Lenten pilgrimage, we may be inclined to focus on our sins, and what is amiss in our lives.

In short whether we look around us or within us we can be tempted to become afraid and lose heart, to feel vulnerable and powerless. Our hearts and our world can appear to us like bleak and inhospitable houses.

It is not only a question of appearances. At this time, our lives and our society need to be evangelised anew. There is still some truth in the words of the psalmist: “In your hearts you devise wrongs; your hands deal out violence on earth.” (Ps 58:2)

Albeit that this is the case, the honest and humble acknowledgement of the situation in which we find ourselves should not turn us into prophets of doom. Pope Francis reminded us some years ago that “those who follow Jesus pay no heed to prophets of doom” (*Hom.*, 16.11.2016).

Later he declared: “If we are limited to a negative view of the world, we will end up denying the incarnation: we will flee from reality, rather than making it incarnate in us. We will close in on ourselves, lament our losses, constantly complain and fall into gloom and pessimism, which never come from God. We are called, instead, to have a view similar to that of God, who discerns what is good and persistently seeks it, sees it and nurtures it.” (*Hom.* 28.07.2022)

It seems to me that the prophets of doom and those who listen to them fall into the trap of the devil who wants to lead us to despair and forget that God is faithful to his promises. St Paul VI believed that “this world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair” (*Message to artists*, 08.12.1965, no. 4).

What happens on the Mount of the Transfiguration reminds us that there is hope and beauty around us.

The episode of the Transfiguration is given to us in order to challenge our narrow, fear-filtered or self-centred vision. The Transfiguration of Jesus spurs us on to look at reality – ours and that of the world – in a different way, with hope and joyful amazement.

Christ is active and alive in the whole of creation. Because of our limitations and our sins it is difficult for us to discern his presence, the signs of his victory over sin and death, but Christ is here. He is to be found where we are, if only we are ready to see him.

With their constant flow of bad news, with their bombardment of verbal and visual negativity, media sources create a dark smokescreen between us and the world which lead to fear and despair.

It would be wrong for us Christians to become blind to the work of the Trinity of love within each one of us and in the whole of creation. We must resist the temptation to see others as threats as soon as they are different to us or consider them to be morally corrupt because they disagree with us.

Those who believe that the present time is ethically worse than any other age in history are cruelly lacking in historical perspective. The 20th century was marked by 2 world wars,

many genocides, 2 atomic bombings, and many colonial conflicts. It would take too long to go through all the centuries and to mention all that was unethical in the decisions of our ancestors, in all our countries, and it would be unfair to forget all the good that the Lord accomplished at the same time through millions of men and women who strived to live according to the Gospel.

In his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened so that we may know what is the hope to which the Lord has called us (cf. 1:18). It is absolutely necessary for us to imitate the Lord our God who “does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” (1 Sam 16:7)

If we remain only at the level of appearances, we will never be able “to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:19).

During this Lenten season, we must pay heed to St Augustine’s words: “Return to your heart; see there what you can perceive of God, for in it is the image of God. In the inner self dwells Christ, there are you renewed after the image of God.” (St Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 18:10) The more we dwell in our hearts with Christ, the more we learn to know him and the more we are enabled to discern his features on the faces of all those we meet, and the more we are able to read the signs of the times as discreet but real opportunities for Christ to transfigure all things.

As we journey towards Easter, may we keep our eyes fixed on Christ’s face. It is the face of Love, which is stronger than death and which spurs us on to love; indeed to be love in the world.

May we remain in the radiant light of the Transfiguration so that as Pope Francis invited us, last December at the beginning of this Jubilee year, we may “always view the world, and all our brothers and sisters in humanity, with a gentle gaze of hope.” (*Thought for the Day*, BBC Radio 4, 28.12.2024)