

2nd Sunday of Lent B

*I will walk in the presence of the Lord
in the land of the living. (Ps 115:9)*



First Reading

Genesis 22:1-2.9-13.15-18

God put Abraham to the test. "Abraham, Abraham" he called. "Here I am" he replied. "Take your son," God said "your only child Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you."

When they arrived at the place God had pointed out to him, Abraham stretched out his hand and seized the knife to kill his son.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven. "Abraham, Abraham" he said. "I am here" he replied. "Do not raise your hand against the boy" the angel said. "Do not harm him, for now I know you fear God. You have not refused me your son, your only son." Then looking up, Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt-offering in place of his son.

The angel of the Lord called Abraham a second time from heaven. "I swear by my own self – it is the Lord who speaks – because you have done this, because you have not refused me your son, your only son, I will shower blessings on you, I will make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants shall gain possession of the gates of their enemies. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, as a reward for your obedience."

Second Reading

Romans 8:31-34

With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give. Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen? When God acquits, could anyone condemn? Could Christ Jesus? No! He not only died for us – he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. "Rabbi", he said "it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him." Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus.

As they came down the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what "rising from the dead" could mean.

Meditation

Every year the first two Sundays of Lent present the whole gamut of human existence, the whole range of the history of salvation. On the first Sunday of Lent the temptation of Jesus recalls the temptation of every human being since the beginning. On this second Sunday of Lent the transfiguration of Jesus holds out the transformation in glory which is the goal of every human hope.

The hope remains as yet unfilled. It is too soon to set up tents. Jesus continues to remind his disciples that first the Son of Man must suffer and be put to death. Only then will they begin to understand what "to rise from the dead" means.

We celebrate Lent caught in the tension between the images of the first and second Sundays, between temptation and transfiguration. Like Abraham, we must walk in faith through the trial, confident that the "sufferings of the present are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us" (Rm 8:18). For "what we shall later be has not yet come to light, but we know that when it comes to light we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2).