

Homily **2nd Sunday in Lent - Year C** (17.3.19)

You know, when I'm faced with a Gospel like this one, that touches on the mystery of the divinity of Christ, and we can all sort of understand it. And, I could, maybe if I read a bit, wax lyrical about the event, but I'm always led to say to myself,

"What's in it for us, what does it mean for us? What's the transfiguration, at this point in Lent, got to do with anything?"

It's removed from my reality, from my experience of everyday life and faith. Well, just let me take you beyond that experience. I want you to imagine reality from God's perspective, as if he was looking down on us. Because here is Christ before us, truly a son of God, born of the Father, or as we say in the creed, which is very important,

"begotten, not made."

Begotten, not made. He is the only person who can truly say he is both human, born of Mary, and yet God is his Father. And the voice from the cloud of course confirms this, saying,

"This is my Son. The chosen One. Listen to Him."

And in listening to him, it's very interesting, I think, this connection, of course he tells us to call God

"Our Father".

So, we all call God

"Our Father"; we even say the prayer which he gave us

"Our Father, who art in heaven" and yet, something doesn't quite ring true. We're not connected to the Father, like Jesus is, even though Jesus is connected to us through his humanity. So just let's use our imagination again, and maybe look at this reality from our perspective, looking upwards, to God. Here are we, the disciples in church, but we're not born of the Father. In reality, we were born of our parents who in turn were born of their parents. Human beings, part of creation made by God. We are, in a sense, in our nature, the opposite of Christ. He is born of the Father, not made by him. We are made by the Father, not

born of him. So the reality from God's eyes, and the reality from our eyes don't meet in our nature. So either Christ has duped us when he told us to call God

"Our Father", or we are trying to become something we can't be. As some would say, it is as impossible as being transfigured.

And I think the solution to the riddle is in the mystery of baptism. In baptism, by use of symbols, we imitated and were initiated into Christ's death. The priest symbolically drowned us. It says if the baby isn't dunked, which I wish I could, I love would dunking babies - If the baby isn't dunked, the water should be poured copiously to symbolize drowning. That in other words, we join Christ three days in the tomb. We imitated becoming like the transfigured Christ, rising with him from the tomb as our heads were pulled out of the font. And our parents were commanded in that service to bring us up to imitate Christ.

Now, that word is a very important word, because that word bridges the gap between the two extreme realities I was talking about. Because imitation is like when children say,

"Let's pretend".

The kind of imitation they do that leads to the real thing. We may have experienced this, although we may have long ago forgotten, when we were growing up. Children know this through games. They're always imitating grown-ups. Let's be a doctor. Let's be a nurse. Let's be a fireman. Unfortunately, I said

"Let's be a priest".

[laughter]

But all the time they are doing this they are forming and shaping their characters. So the imitation of being grown-up helps them to grow up in reality. Some of them do become what they pretended to be. No wonder, I think this is an incredible connection, no wonder Jesus said,

"Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God."

Because imitation comes natural to them and as adults we have to re-learn this, that we may grow as adults in the faith.

I think Lent, primarily, is about learning to imitate Christ so as to grow up into the Easter mystery. It's about character building, transfiguring ourselves, changing. Once we realize that when we say the

"Our Father", we're dressing ourselves up as if we were Christ.

It's the imitation game, to pun on the film. The imitation can be less of a game when done in faith and more of a pointer to reality. Because to call upon and act as if God is my Father is to imitate Christ. To have Christ at one's side. To start to become like that which we imitate, it is to learn the meaning of the Easter message about being born again of water and the Spirit, begotten spiritually by God.

Lent is a symbol, for me, of this earthly life before we realize what we're called to, **Easter** is a symbol of our true life of faith, and the **Transfiguration** given to us in Lent is a symbol of the work of imitation we must do to bridge the gap between these two realities. So to imitate, like children do, is to change slowly, imperceptibly maybe at first, but to change and be transfigured by imitation into an adult faith.

Children teach us that transfiguration is not impossible, but a reality by imitation. Lent is about becoming through imitating Christ [and now I don't mean just his 40 days fast but that's the beginning steps] to be born again at Easter and at Easter experiencing that we have new life begotten by the Father.