

Homily
2nd Sunday of Lent - A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
March 07-08, 2020

Gn 12: 1-4a
Ps 33: 4-5, 18-20, 22
2 Tm 1: 8b-10
Mt 17: 1-9

Capo 2

A D E A D E A
Be Thou my | vision, O | Lord of my | heart; |

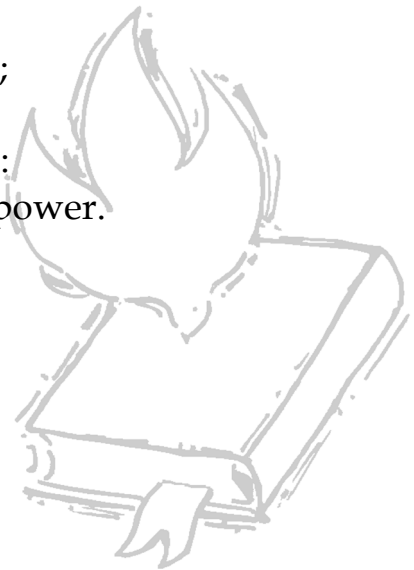
E D A E
Naught be all | else to me, | save that Thou | art. |

D A E A E D-E
Thou my best | thought, by | day or by | night, |

A D A E A
Waking or | sleeping, Thy | presence my | light. |

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.



In preparation for my homily on this weekend honoring St. Patrick of Ireland and our inaugural St. Patrick's Day Mass & Dinner next Saturday, I remembered this old eighth century Irish Folk tune to which a Church hymn was added in honor of St. Patrick. According to my research (and many websites provide the exact same description - I copied the text from the website <http://www.be-thou-my-vision.com/index.html>), "this ancient hymn is entitled 'Slane,' from an 8th Century Irish melody. The melody is named after Slane Hill - and to an event recorded in the land's history thought to be around AD 433. Tradition goes that the ruling King of the time (High King Logaire of Tara) had decreed that no one could kindle a fire until Logaire had lit his to announce the start of the pagan spring festival. However, St Patrick defied the royal order and lit candles on the Eve of the festival on Tara Hill (approximately ten miles from Slane Hill in County Meath). The King was so impressed by Patrick's defiance that he pardoned him and allowed him to continue his missionary work in Ireland. Patrick would go on to convert 100,000 people and establish 2,000

churches. No small feat for a man originally kidnapped by pirates and taken as a slave to Ireland!

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

I think to myself that in the world of parenting, the most obvious way that a parent keeps a child by their side is to hold their hand. I have noticed that this is an instinctual response that a child offers their parents. In the world of faith, the most obvious way to seek guidance in life is to put your confidence in those people with who you associate, who understand your culture, who understand your vocation or your ministry. For the people of Ireland, St. Patrick serves as that person. For this old Kankakee County Bordertown Parish in the Joliet Diocese, we

give thanks to a saint who points us to Christ, who subsequently points us to heaven.

Every Second Sunday of Lent, the theme of our gospel reading focuses on the transfiguration of our Lord, the moment when Jesus climbs a mountain with his disciples and reveals himself to be the Christ, the beloved Son of our Father, the one who was sent to fulfill the law and the prophecies of the Old Testament. All three gospels tell us that on this mountain, on this peak which symbolizes the greatest location on earth to encounter the divine, both Moses and Elijah appeared, Moses representing the law of the faith and Elijah representing prophetic discourse. The gospels essentially tell us that Jesus is the new law and the new prophet, the one who fulfills all that the law and the prophets have discussed from the past and makes real in the present.

Where the three gospels differ significantly concerns the disposition of the three disciples to whom the Lord reveals himself. The Gospel of Mark portrays the disciples as clueless to the meaning of this

Transfiguration, a theme that weaves itself throughout the entire Markan text. The Gospel of Luke presents the disciples as having some type of divine, visionary dream from which the Lord awakens them. What the gospel of Matthew does, in contradistinction to the gospels of Mark and Luke, is to portray the disciples as fully awake and fully cognizant of the divine presence that they have encountered, and as a result, becoming scared out of their minds from what they encountered.

I don't think that this response is so unique from the type of response any one of us would have. Whenever any of us encounter something that is devastating or beatific, we all begin to shake and tremble. It amazes me that people in this world try to beat their chests and cry out with great bravado about their strength and resolve they have in the world, a resolve I interpret in the Catholic faith as some type of "Rambo theology." It amazes me how people believe that they can endure anything that is set before them, from small events in the world like a test or an important presentation at work to something much more serious such as a tsunami or some other type of natural disaster or

unnatural war. The fact is, no matter how much we thump our chests concerning our strength in front of the divine, the presence of God that is revealed before us should, and most likely will, scare the life out of us.

What our beloved Lord provides for us is the means by which we may encounter the divine face-to-face without being afraid. It is the Lord who takes us by the hand and guides us to safety, the Lord who offers us the hand of love so that we can bond with him during good times and in bad. And it is our Lord who touched the disciples in today's gospel and gently instructed them not to be fearful, for with the Lord by their side they would be safe and sound; they would not fear the Lord for the Lord is the one who guides them to the place where they needed to go.

Two thousand years later, we realize that when we hold the hand of the Lord, it is He would guide us to the through the desert of temptation in this Season of Lent and up the mountain of faith. It is our Lord that guides us to the woman at the well and to the tomb of Lazarus. It is the Lord who guides us to altar and through the cross and it is the Lord that

tells us not to fear, for through the Lord's guidance that we find hope in the everlasting life rather than the fear we experience with the unknown that awaits us in the world yet to come.

As I reflected on the story of this transfigured Lord in Matthew's Gospel, I recalled the words of St. Pope John Paul II, who wrote about this event in an Apostolic Exhortation from 1986 entitled, "The Consecrated Life" (*Vita Consacrata*). In this document, he instructs us that this moment of the Transfiguration was given to the disciples to prepare them for the sufferings and difficulties which they were to face in their ministry. The Holy Father writes that this image of Christ transfigured provided the disciples with enough strength to continue the difficult ministry that awaited them, as well as us in today's society. The only way to encounter and overcome these difficulties result from our dependence on God and our ability to reach out to the Lord in order to allow our Lord to guide us through these difficulties. It is these words of our Holy Father with which I wish to conclude today's homily. Our Holy Father writes,

... the disciples who have enjoyed this intimacy with the Master, surrounded for a moment by the splendor of the Trinitarian life and of the communion of saints, and as it were caught up in the horizon of eternity, are immediately brought back to daily reality, where they see "Jesus only," in the lowliness of his human nature, and are invited to return to the valley, to share with him the toil of God's plan and to set off courageously on the way of the cross.

... The event of the Transfiguration marks a decisive moment in the ministry of Jesus. It is a revelatory event which strengthens the faith in the disciples' hearts, prepares them for the tragedy of the cross and prefigures the glory of the resurrection. This mystery is constantly relived by the Church, the people on its way to the eschatological encounter with its Lord.

... los discípulos que han gozado de la intimidad del Maestro, envueltos momentáneamente por el esplendor de la vida trinitaria y de la comunión de los santos, como arrebatados en el horizonte de la eternidad, vuelven de repente a la realidad cotidiana, donde no ven más que a «Jesús solo» en la humildad de la naturaleza humana, y son invitados a descender para vivir con Él las exigencias del designio de Dios y emprender con valor el camino de la cruz.

... El episodio de la Transfiguración marca un momento decisivo en el ministerio de Jesús. Es un acontecimiento de revelación que consolida la fe en el corazón de los discípulos, los prepara al drama de la Cruz y anticipa la gloria de la resurrección. Este misterio es vivido continuamente por la Iglesia, pueblo en camino hacia el encuentro escatológico con su Señor.

