

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT; Cycle – B; Feb 25th 2024
Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Romans 8:31-34; Mark 9:2-10

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Just a day before his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. made a famous speech in which he spoke about his mountaintop experience. This speech he made in Memphis, Tennessee on April 3rd 1968. His speech ended with these words:

“Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because, I’ve been to the mountain top. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And he has allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land.”

If King had died without making this famous speech, perhaps, the Civil Right Movement would not have received its momentum. The fate of it would have been different. But this speech of his mountain experience made all the difference. It assured his followers that he was not simply a victim of circumstance but that his death had a purpose and it was God’s plan in the long run of liberation.

In Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism Mountain is the place where God comes down to speak to His people. It is on Mount Sinai God spoke to Moses and made the Covenant with the people of Israel. Moses had another mountain experience in his critical time. Due to the infidelity of Israel Moses was denied to enter the Promised Land. In this crisis God asked Moses to go up to the Abarim Mountain to view the Promised Land lying far ahead. This mountaintop experience of Moses was something encouraging and boosting for his spirit. With this incident God reassured Moses that He was still faithful to his Promise and people were reassured that Moses indeed was the man of God who led the people to the right destination.

Today’s first reading and the gospel bring us two different mountaintop experience, that of Abraham and Jesus. Abraham’s life was filled with uncertainties and discontentment. But finally, he thought he would be happy when God gave him a son, Isaac. But his happy life, once again, turned into utter sorrow and disappointment when God asked him to sacrifice his only son. But Abraham never questioned God’s command and without any hesitation and delay, went up to the mountain top of Moriah. But quite dramatic incidents took place there and Abraham was blessed with God experience on the mountaintop. It was not the same Abraham who came down of Moriah. The God experience and promise God gave him changed Abraham’s entire course of life. Though

Abraham was in crisis on the way to the mountain, the crisis disappeared once he reached the top where he met God.

The mountain played a pivotal role in the public ministry of Jesus. He delivered the Beatitudes sitting on the mountaintop. Whenever he was in trouble he ran to the mountaintop to converse with his Father alone. In today's gospel we see another mountain experience of Jesus and his three beloved disciples. This happy experience came to Jesus and his disciples at the critical situation. After Peter had acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus predicted his imminent death which caused great anguish among the disciples. Peter made a vain attempt persuade Jesus to turn away from this drastic end. The mountain experience was more a help and boost for the disciples than Jesus. They could foresee the glory awaiting Jesus and that great mountain experience helped the disciples to get through the big crisis. The presence of Moses and Elijah was a sign of OK for Jesus to go ahead with the plan of the Heavenly Father. The last mountain experience of Jesus was on the top of Calvary which gave him the foretaste of the glorious resurrection.

*In our life journey we all have to go through the valley of tears, crisis failures, disappointments, loss and hardships. There are moments in our lives when our hopes and dreams shatter and the earth slips away under our feet. Then we too need a mountain experience away from this world which, only Jesus can give us. In today's gospel we heard God the Father asks us, **"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."** When we listen to Jesus he will take us to the mountaintop to show us the Promised Land. The mountaintop where Jesus is taking us is nothing less than the Mount of Calvary where he sacrificed his life for us and made our life secure; it is where he regained the Promised Land for us. So when we follow Jesus up to Calvary and sit at the foot of his cross, we will see the meaning of our little crosses and we will be able to handle them better. Jesus said to his disciples, **"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."** To millions of people, Jesus' cross gave strength to carry their cross with ease. So our readings today are clear: seek to do the Will of God in all things; believe that Christ died and was raised from the dead for us and see in the Transfiguration of Christ that we also can be transfigured by our complete belief in him. Let us give all to the Lord and receive from the Lord whatever he gives us.*