

Second Sunday of Lent

February 24, 2013

Why is it that we are more fascinated by bad news than the good news of Jesus Christ? Why is it that we seem more fascinated by signs of evil than signs of God's grace? Maybe the worst temptation of Satan is not to believe in the good news of God's presence in our lives. That's the reason we have today's story of the transfiguration. In fact, I think this is the reason why the Gospel writers recorded the story for the people of their time. In that time, the people were beginning to wonder if the good news of risen life would ever come to them. They were tempted to believe in the bad news instead of the good news. And so Luke reminded them that even when Jesus was about to die, even when the disciples were fearful of that death, Jesus revealed the good news that God was with them.

Centuries later, the early Christians, called the catechumens, were also beginning to wonder about the good news of God's presence. In just a few weeks they were about to be baptized and they were beginning to get cold feet. They were tempted to believe not the good news, but the bad news that they would never be able to break from their bad habits of a lifetime and begin the new life of a Christian. And so the church on the Second Sunday of Lent gave the catechumens this dazzling story of God's presence; like the disciples who became frightened when they entered the cloud, they heard a voice from the cloud that said, "Don't be afraid. This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

Now I have no doubts about the presence of evil in this world. But I also believe in the real presence of God in our world, a presence more powerful and energizing than a room-full of satans. Lent is a time for us to affirm our belief in the risen life, in the presence of God in our world, in the good news that Christ has overcome evil and sin, not only the diabolical evil that makes the news, but the petty evil that lurks in our hearts. Lent is that special time for us to believe more in the power of the good news than in the sadness of the bad news.

The scriptures that we hear during Lent feature two geographical spots: the desert and the mountain. Last week we were in the desert; today we're on top of the mountain. We need to stand in both spots during Lent, the desert *and* the mountain. In the desert, we encounter the devil, we face our guilt and the evil that abounds in our world. The Christian life is impossible without the desert. But it is also impossible without the mountain top where we can breathe fresh air and see everything in a new light. It is good for us to be on the mountain, where we can see and listen to God in a new way.

This Lent we must find a way to go to two places: to some desert where we can face our devil and to some mountain top where we can hear the good news that our God is greater than any evil we can ever imagine.

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