

Homily. 2nd Sunday of Lent. Year A. 7/8 March 2020.

The 1st weekend of Lent story of the temptations of Jesus was all about the subtle devilish serpent trying to trick Jesus into doubting his identity as the Son of God, having Him prove it by using His authority and energy selfishly. Had Jesus fallen for these traps He would have contradicted and undermined the very identity God gave Him at His Baptism, for God, and by extension God's Son, is always directed towards our salvation and that of the World, never seeking to promote or prove God's self.

This weekend, more or less in the middle of St. Matthew's gospel, Jesus takes His 3 closest disciples up a high mountain for an encounter with God. Atop the mountain Peter, James and John witness a shining, transfigured Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah who represent all of the Old Testament Law and the words and promises of the Prophets. Of course, they want to stay in this glorious place with Peter, ever the one to speak up, suggesting they build of 3 tents. While this response isn't odd it isn't to be, nor is it the point of what they've been seen and heard.

When the Divine Cloud covered them and the Voice of God was heard, the experience and message was similar to what occurred at the Jordan River Baptism. God affirmed to them that Jesus was most surely the Beloved Son, enjoying God's favour. But, that was not all, for God spoke another short commandment, three words; Listen to Him.

I was reminded by this of a few weeks ago when I talked to you about the difference between hearing and listening, one being an act of our ears and senses, the other being a decision we take to use our minds and hearts so

as to come to an understanding of what God is saying to us today. We have to hear before we can listen, but we mustn't confuse merely hearing with true listening. This is the message God is offering to us now; that we hear and next decide to actively listen to God's Son with our minds in gear and our hearts engaged. If we lived this 'listening commandment' then we couldn't sin or stray for our thoughts and deeds would be conformed to those of Christ, fulfilling all the commandments.

It can be said that there are only 2 parts to the entire bible; the first 11 chapters of the Book of Genesis about creation and the fall of humanity, then beginning in Chapter 12, everything else being the story of God seeking to save us from ourselves. This saving act culminates in the life and ministry, and especially in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, giving birth to the Holy Spirit and the Church, God's pilgrim people.

The first reading is taken from that turning point, the four verses that begin Genesis Chapter 12. They are about a man called Abram listening to God and God's promises, deciding to trust what God has said. This led him to set forth on a journey that still rolls onwards in us. The point here is that this man listened and acted by following God's invitation. The message is for us to keep this going by listening to and following the directions of our Teacher, Jesus, our older and wiser Brother who is leading us forwards by faith into the freedom that befits us as God's sons and daughters today.