

Homily. 2nd Sunday of Lent. Year. A. 4/5 March 2023.

We've all got an appendage, a small one, that's brought more trouble and strife to us and to humanity than anything else; Here, of course, I'm speaking of the tongue. Sticks and stones will break our bones and maybe names mightn't hurt us, but insulting, thoughtless, degrading and disrespectful words certainly can. Friendships have broken down, marriages have crumbled, communities have torn apart and wars have started all because words were uttered that ended up sundering apart people from one another, from creation and even from God. Of course, sometimes words that could have helped and healed have not been spoken, the possible goodness of our tongues being restrained for some fearful reason. As exemplified in the old adage; Jaw, jaw, not war, war; when talking is a better option than stubborn silence or outright conflict.

If our words are to heal and help, to reconcile and glue us together, which is surely what we want, then something vital has to happen first; We have to learn to listen and listen deeply. It's on to this desire and end, our living of God's new commandment, that today's gospel throws much light.

The transfiguration on the mountain happened after a conflict between Jesus and his disciples. They and especially Peter, saw Jesus' destiny as a coming into power, glory and control. After all, he was the Christ, God's anointed and chosen Son, so they figured that following him was their fast track to victory and sharing in the spoils he'd win. When Jesus told them very clearly that God's victory was to be achieved by his sacrifice and self-giving death, and only then some days later his resurrection, they were

far from happy and said so. From being praised for listening to God, they were then roundly condemned for listening to themselves and to Satan.

The mountain experience threw the light of God onto their conflict and disappointment. Peter, James and John, the leaders amongst the group, saw beyond the veil as it parted for a while. They saw the connection between Jesus words and work and all that God had said in the teachings of Law and the words of the prophets. Then, when covered by the brightness of the Divine cloud, they heard an affirmation of Jesus real identity as the beloved Son, pleasing to God and they heard God's new commandment for all who seek to follow the Lord; Listen to him.

If we're going to unleash the power of our tongues in good ways, then it's a must-do that we first listen to Jesus. He still speaks to us through the scriptures, the sacraments, our consciences and within our Church community. He can be heard in the the honest thoughts and insights of others, seen at work in good, generous deeds and faithful ways of living and he is felt in the care, kindness and sacrifices of those around us.

To live in the transfigured light of Christ and the brightness of God means listening twice and deeply and long before we speak, with both ears open, our minds receptive and our hearts responsive. How else can we ever hope to listen to him if all we can hear is ourselves? How else can we ever follow the listening commandment of God if our heads and hearts are only echo chambers full of the noise and incivility of our times? This is the work of these coming Lenten days that will help transfigured and transform us in Christ, making us more truly and fully like him.

