

March 16, 17, 2020
Second Sunday of Lent

All Saints Parish, Syr. NY
Sr. Kathy Osbelt

It must have been on such a starry night as one I once saw over an Arizona desert, that Abraham, an old man, is promised that he would have descendants more numerous. Indeed, he is the father of Christianity, Judaism, and Muslim faiths. God told him: "I am the one who led you here, who took care of you. You shall possess this land." Abraham asks: "How will I know your promise is true?" Animals were cut in half for a ritual that Abraham would have known as a solemn way of making a vow. Each party walks between the two halves and the promise or agreement is sealed. God moves between them and in that moment, the Covenant with Abraham and all his descendants is sealed.

Paul explains in the reading that the Covenant of love is breached by humans time and again. In tears, Paul explains that some who have heard the Word of God are now enemies of the Cross, their minds being occupied by earthly things. These people are stuck on the letter of the law, not the law of love. But, with hope, Paul says there are models, followers of Jesus who remind us who we are and remind us of the promise of glory.

Then, there appears on Mt Tabor, the glory that shown around Jesus and the companions who were with him. Beside Jesus appears Moses and Elijah, indicating that Jesus is the real deal... he is the essence of the law and all that the prophets came to deliver. Moses is the one who led the people of God to liberation, one who confronted those who would oppress others into slavish worship. Both underscore the fact that Jesus represents the new exodus...a new liberation. And what is it the Jesus came to liberate us from? From anything and all things that come between us and our relationship with God, with anything/anyone that God created.

Jesus came to liberate us from chasing after those things that we think would make us happy, freeing us to live out the love we have been given. Jesus used the word metanoia. In the 4th Century St. Jerome translated the bible into Latin and used the word "penance and repent" for metanoia. But what it really means is "change your mind." Look at life and others differently.

So what gets in our way of looking at the world as Jesus would? Is it the need to be in control? Always right? Is it the need to be esteemed? Getting credit for something you did. How about the need to be comfortable and secure? Can't leave my comfort zone, like the screens you may attend to instead of your family members, or an exclusive affiliation with your "tribe" because they make you feel comfortable. Leaving these pieces of ego (**edging God out**) behind may make us very fearful.

Louis is one of hundreds of young people, former gang members, would be dead today had Father Gregory Boyle given into his need for comfort, security, or esteem. Louis once said to Father Greg, "G, what difference does it make if I get killed. My life is not worth anything." Father got him a job in the bakery. Louis was quite tattooed up and scary looking but was the most gentle, kindest, hard working young baker. When Father had to speak at a university he took Louis to tell his story. After he spoke there were questions. One woman asked Louis, "What message would you give your two children?" Louise, with tears and in a halting voice said: "I would tell them not to be like me." The woman retorted: "Louis, you are kind, gentle, and with great courage. I pray your children are like you." Louis was liberated as were all in the auditorium.

A woman shared with me that she was afraid to go to the Oxford Inn to serve the men. She was afraid even to go into that neighborhood. She was afraid to be near "those men." Finally, she went with a group to serve and found broken men, not monsters. She was liberated.

So maybe you gave up chocolate, or sweets, or morning t.v.: but what have these done to strengthen your relationship to God? How have these helped a brother or sister?

The voice of heard on the mountain that day said: "This is my beloved, listen to Him!" And what does Jesus say? Jesus says..."Do not fear." We are called to take off the chains of injustice. Bring liberty to the captive, including yourself if you are captive to anything. Give sight to those who are blind and limping along. Confront the lies, the illusions. But don't forget, I am always with you. What have we to fear?