

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Second Sunday in Lent

By: Fr. Bob

There is a rather stunning film called Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge based on the famous short story. It's the story of a man about to be hanged. Enemy soldiers march him out to a bridge across Owl Creek. They take a board and they place it so that half the board rests on the bridge and the other half extends beyond the bridge.

One of the soldiers stands on the half that rests on the bridge itself, and the condemned man is made to walk out and stand on the other half that's overhanging beyond the edge. The man's legs and arms are now tied. A rope is dropped down from the top of the bridge and looped around the man's neck.

When everything is ready, the commanding officer barks and order, the soldier steps off his board on the bridge, the condemned man's board gives way and he plunges downward with the rope around his neck.

But something unexpected happens. The rope breaks, and the condemned man goes plummeting down to the river below.

Down, down, down into the water he sinks. And as he does, he's aware that he's alive. He struggles to free his hands and his feet and miraculously manages to untie himself. Realizing that he has a second chance at life, the man begins to swim down the river. As he does, he passes a tree branch floating in the water. He is struck at the beauty of the leaves on the branch. He marvels at the intricate pattern of the veins on the leaves. Then he sees a spider spinning a web, and he's struck by the beauty of the web and the tiny drops of water that are clinging to it like so many sparkling diamonds. He is aware of the wetness of the water on his body. He looks up and he sees the blueness of the sky. Never has the world looked so beautiful to him.

His reverie is broken when suddenly the soldiers on the bridge begin to fire at the man. So he fights his way through a hail of bullets, passes a water snake, goes over a waterfall, and finally swims ashore totally exhausted. He drops to the sand and he rolls over. He looks upward, and he sees a flower nearby. He crawls over and smells it. Everything is so beautiful, and it's so great to be alive. Then a bullet whistles through the trees, and he leaps to his feet and begins to run. And he runs and he runs until he comes to a house with a white picket fence around it. Mysteriously the gate swings open. The man can't believe his eyes. He's back home, safe. He calls his wife's name. She comes running out of the house, arms outstretched to greet him.

And just as they embrace, the camera swiftly take us back to Owl Creek Bridge. This time it's different. We see the body of the very same man, this time plunging downward with the rope around his neck. Then we see his body swinging back and forth, back and forth. The man is dead. The audience is left stunned.

Then we realize that all the effort, the running, the second chance was pure make-believe. The man did not escape after all. He merely imagined that he had in the split second before he fell to his death. He merely imagined that he had gotten a second chance at life, a life that he suddenly saw in a different way, a life that he suddenly saw through new eyes. For the first time, he saw the world for what it is—a beautiful place. For the first time, he saw life for what it is. He saw the signs of hope that he had missed. That was the lesson of the film.

Perhaps our scripture for the Second Sunday in Lent is a statement to us that sometimes we need to get startled into awareness, we need to get shaken into aliveness!

Our first reading from the book of Genesis is a difficult one. We can't imagine, I think, a God who would ask what Abraham's God asked of him. To sacrifice his own son out of obedience? The son that he and Sarah had been gifted with in old age!

Our scripture scholars remind us that in fact, in those ancient times, people did sacrifice their children to appease the Gods. And while this was not a practice of Judaism, there were some Kings, anxious to cover all the bases, that did resort to this. And so the scholars suggest, the story of Abraham and Isaac was told as a polemic against human sacrifice.

But the story illustrates the fact for us that Abraham, as a result of this horrendous moment, became more and more aware of God's love and the covenant. He understood, as he had not understood before, what Paul tells us in the second reading—God is with us and for us and can't be separated from us. And maybe Abraham had to be shocked into this—maybe we do also!

What are the incidents in our own lives that have awakened us? What has happened to us along the journey that has jolted us to realize how blessed we are and how close our God is with us. We would certainly wish that some of the jolting didn't happen! We could do without the shock! But the awareness transfigures us and enlightens us so that we see differently.

The Gospel is not only about the disciples seeing Jesus dress in bright white. It's about them hearing the message of death and suffering—and the resulting resurrection. They would have preferred not to know this part of the story—the multiplication of food and the healing and miraculous happenings would have been enough for them. But it wouldn't be the complete story. There would be something missing.

Our Lenten journey—our identification with Jesus who suffers for us—is time for us to be stretched into awareness of the wonderful reality of a God who wildly loves us. Let's trust in that love.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Genesis 22:1-8 Romans 8:31-34 Mark 9:2-10

March 1, 2015

靈 修 生 活

四 旬 期 第 二 主 日

林 思 川 神 父

經文分析：耶穌顯容

馬爾谷福音第八章 27 節，敘述耶穌由加里肋亞前往耶路撒冷的過程。一路上耶穌不斷地教導門徒，使他們明白到底「跟隨祂」的意義是什麼。因此，這一大段經文中，仍是以不同的事件，來說明「基督論」這個主題，其中一個高峰事件，就是教會安排信仰團體在四旬期第二主日一起聆聽的「耶穌顯容」故事（谷九 2-10）。

第七天

耶穌顯容事件發生在「六天後」，也就是這段敘述前面所報導的「斐理伯的凱撒勒雅」事件（八 27-九 1）以後的「第七天」。這個時間的提示含有一個更深的意義：以前梅瑟領受天主的法律和誡命時，曾在西乃山上停留了四十天。在「第七天」上主從雲彩中召叫了他（出廿四 16），因此，在舊約的傳統中第七天就是神顯現的日子。

光榮的顯現

馬爾谷將山上發生的事件描寫為「耶穌容貌改變」，三位門徒看見的外在變化是耶穌的「衣服發光」，變成為極度潔白。因此「耶穌容貌改變」的意思，大概並不是預先顯示祂復活後的身體，而更是祂在末日光榮顯現時的光華形象（八 38），亦即祂在天父內本來就有的光榮（若十七 5）。

顯現的見證人

整個事件出自耶穌的主動，祂帶領三位最親密的門徒（五 37；十三 3；十四 33），一起「上了一座高山」。基督信仰傳統認為這座山就是「大博爾山」，在猶太傳統中大博爾山就一直被視為是聖山。耶穌「僅僅」帶了三位門徒上山，目的大概和當年梅瑟只帶了若蘇厄一人上西乃山一樣，主要是使他們三人成為神性顯現的見證人。

厄里亞和梅瑟

此時，厄里亞和梅瑟也顯現出來，他們二位之所以能顯現，乃是因為他們未曾死亡。根據列下二 11 厄里亞並沒有死，而是被火馬車接升到天上；雖然聖經中有關於梅瑟逝世的記載（申卅四 1-7），然而根據猶太民間信仰，梅瑟並未死亡，而是和厄里亞一樣被接升天。由於他們過去被提上天，使他們在這時候能夠顯現。

厄里亞代表舊約中關於末世來臨預言的實現（九 11），梅瑟曾預言在他以後天主主要興起一位像他一樣的先知。他們和耶穌的交談，就是為耶穌所做的先知性的見證，說明耶穌的確是末世性的先知，帶來決定性的默西亞。

門徒們的不瞭解

伯鐸建議搭建「帳棚」，使人憶起天主最初在人間居住的「會幕」，這也是後來猶太教帳棚節所慶祝的主題。但是伯鐸的建議完全不恰當，他只是希望給予他目前所經歷的「轉化的世界」，加上一個制度框架而使之固定下來。

福音作者清楚指出伯鐸（和門徒們）根本不瞭解眼前所發生的事，這個「門徒的不瞭解」也是整部福音書的重要主題之一。而門徒們之所以害怕得嚇呆了，也是猶太傳統中，人們看見神顯現時的「正常」反應。

耶穌是天主子

天上出現的雲彩，顯視天主具體的臨在，在 出廿四 16 也可看到相同的主題。由雲彩中所發出的聲音，是以門徒們為對象，告訴他們眼前的「這一位」到底是誰：「這是我的愛子」（一 11），因此「你們應該聽從祂」。

「天主子」的頭銜，使得這段經文之前所提到的「默西亞」稱號（八 29）更為精確。這段話也影射 詠二 7 的經文，藉此而使人更能看清耶穌和天主之間的關係。祂和天主之間的這個獨特關係，決定祂的一切生活與工作，也建立祂權威的基礎。

事實上，「天主子」這個頭銜不只在此（福音的中間部分）出現；在福音的一開始，耶穌受洗時，就有天上的聲音對祂說：「祢是我的愛子」（谷一 11）；而在最後耶穌被釘死後，一位羅馬百夫長也承認：「這人真是天主子」（谷十五 39）。由此可知，馬爾谷福音的主要目的，就在見證「耶穌真是天主子」！

結語： 顯現結束後，一切恢復為原初的「平靜」，除了耶穌以外，門徒剛才所見的一切都消失了。他們的眼光只能集中在耶穌身上，只能聆聽祂的教導，耶穌是他們生命方向的唯一指引。

下山時，耶穌囑咐他們，「非等人子從死者中復活後」不要透露任何事情。意思是要直到耶穌被釘死並且復活以後，門徒才會明白，默西亞耶穌不只是大能的「天主子」，而且也是必須受許多苦，被殺害的「人子」（人 31）。耶穌面對苦難時完全信賴的態度，更清楚地表現出天主子的身份。門徒（以及後世一切基督徒）必須如此認識、信從並宣講耶穌基督。

二零一五年三月一日

本 週 讀 經

創 22:1-18; 羅 8:31-34; 谷 9:2-10

