

## Points to Help Homily Preparation from a JPIC Perspective

Readings of the Second Sunday of Lent – Sunday, March 8, 2009

Gen. 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Rom 8:31b-34

Mark 9: 2-10

I'd like to offer two suggestions on how to incorporate JPIC themes into this Sunday homily: one is based on the reading from Genesis; the other is based on Mark's Gospel.

### **1st Reading from Genesis**

The story from Genesis is about Abraham being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac upon the command from, what it appears to be, a capricious God. This passage can be a tough one to preach on. It grates against the feelings of parents and against contemporary sensitivities. As a homilist, you might approach this reading by exploring the following themes:

1. Parents who follow the inner voice of one's conscience and make difficult, personal sacrifices for God in ways that – directly or indirectly – involve their children.
2. Parents who, by their personal example of an unrelenting commitment to justice, peace and integrity of creation, teach their children a powerful lesson about what it means to be obedient to God.

Examples: I can think of a father, on a cold January night, bringing his small children to a prayer vigil against the death penalty held in front of the prison. Another example is a mother who, during a parish outreach to the desperately poor victims of flooding in Haiti, speaks to her daughter about the importance of following the example of Jesus and making a personal sacrifice to help those in need. This 7-year-old child, inspired by her mom's words and her personal example, decides to give away \$35 which she had collected in a piggy bank. There are other examples of children who, inspired by their parents' personal sacrifices and commitment to the needy and common good, give up lucrative careers to be of service to others. I'm sure you can think of many such examples from your ministerial life.

### **The Gospel**

The Gospel story narrates the event of Jesus' transfiguration. A person is "transfigured" when some quality comes to the surface; when hidden potential comes to light. This story is not only about what happened to Jesus, it's also about us - our hidden nature and potential as members of the body of Christ. What is it that prevents us, as individuals and as a community, from bringing more fully to the surface, in our words and deeds, Jesus' own love for the poor and his commitment to justice?

Another approach to today's Gospel might be to reflect on transfiguration experiences in our own lives. Can you think of the times when you came to see, in a whole new light, a particular person, a group of people, a social issue? How has this "mountain" experience transformed and empowered you to work for the common good and for justice?

A reflection on today's Gospel story can also integrate and reflect our concerns for the integrity of God's creation. A number of saints and theologians have interpreted the passage about Jesus' transfiguration as being a glimpse of the future transfiguration of the entire cosmos. On Mount La Verna, St. Francis had a profound experience of radical solidarity with all creation that then found its expression in the Canticle of Creation. Can you speak about the times in which you may have been touched or, as it were, "transfigured" by the experience of God in the beauty of creation? Where and when did it happen? In what ways has this experience led you to pay attention and listen to the voice of Christ speaking to you through the signs of the times? (e.g., global climate change, concerns about ocean or air pollution, etc.)

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