

Homily
March 16, 2025
2nd Sunday of Lent
19:42 – 31:46

We have the good fortune today to hear of two “theophanies.” You know the word Epiphany, which means manifestation. A theophany is the manifestation of God to a human being.

Abram. In the Book of Genesis there is an arc of his relationship with the Lord and it’s a very intimate relationship. God actually speaks to Abraham. Today we witness that. God tells him that there’s a promise that he’s going to fulfill because Abram believes.

The promise is the Land of Cana, which God had promised when he brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans. And now, it is about to unfold.

When Abram asked that question that we heard, “How can I be sure that this is going to happen?” God does something very amazing. He makes a treaty, a **Covenant** with Abram. God is the initiator of this Covenant, and it’s very personal. God tells him, as you heard, to bring three different animals on the hoof and a turtle dove and a pigeon and to cut them up and to lay them on either side, with a path in between.

Now, this was a common practice in the ancient Near East, for either treaties or covenants. We don’t cut animals up for our treaties, do we? I hope not.

And then that wonderful moment when Abram stays with the symbols of this Covenant, this sacrifice that has been made, and endures a terrible darkness. But then through that darkness, passes between the animals - or the carcasses, a flaming pot and a torch. It is **the Lord** who passes between.

It’s very unusual throughout the Old Testament that God does that. And it was God who initiated it. And Abram is the beneficiary. What a powerful, intimate moment for him. And there’s a whole lot more which follows in the Book of Genesis about Abram becoming Abraham and Sarai becoming Sarah, and the need for an heir, etc.

This is foundational: The Covenant.

Jesus takes Peter, John and James up the mountain to pray. Have you ever asked yourself the question, “Why Peter, John and James?” I mean, there were nine others. Why couldn’t the whole troupe gone up the mountain?

Now this is the Gospel According to Luke and if we read back to Chapter 5, when Jesus is teaching at the Lake of Gennesaret, he invites Peter, James and John – well, Peter – to go out and make a catch. He does. It's this marvelous catch. John and James have to go out and help to get the fish back in.

It's then that we hear that the three of them “left everything” and followed Jesus. They were the first. So I surmise that's the reason that Jesus took them up this mountain.

Now, the context for going up there is the fact that Jesus has just proclaimed to them his journey to Jerusalem, where he will suffer humiliation and death, and promises resurrection. And of course, we know Peter's reaction, right? “You can't do this!” And Jesus tells him, “Get behind me Satan.”

So sometimes I wonder why did you take Peter up there? You know. He's always blurting something out. Part of the mystery.

Peter had passion. And we see it again. He has the passion to try to put up three tents: one for Jesus, for Moses and Elijah.

Now, why Moses and Elijah? You know. They're dead. But why them? I mean...

God brought about with Moses, the Covenant of Moses and the Law that governed the people. Elijah, an 8th Century prophet, is one of the first prophets. And we know that Elijah is “taken up” to be with God. That's why they're there. Because you see, the Law and the Prophets, that's who Peter, James and John had listened to all of their lives until they met Jesus.

What a wonderful moment! To witness these two sages from the past, to be in converse with the ones that they had followed. I can imagine quickly why Peter was so excited. Can't you?

And then, that cloud, that darkness that comes over them and frightens them – Peter, John and James, that is. And the voice that speaks, as the voice did in Chapter 4 of Luke, at the Baptism of the Lord, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” And now, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.”

And immediately, Moses and Elijah are not there. And only Jesus, who is now to be “listened to.” Very carefully listened to. For the glory of God has been there in their midst. And the **Word** of God is in their midst.

Anybody here had a theophany? Probably not. Although we've each had our encounter with God at some point, haven't we? In some way, shape or form. - - - whether it's a Sacramental encounter,

whether we were reading something and a light went on and we said, “Thank you God for helping me see this.”

So what are we to do with these readings?

Perhaps, my brothers and sisters, it's to spend some time this week growing in our intimacy with God. The God who would intimately converse with Abram and Abraham and through to Moses on the mountain, to Elijah, whom he directed in his prophetic ministry.

Think about it. You know Lent is a great time to renew our intimate relationship with God. Because it's concentrated time. We're encouraged to do it. We're given opportunities to do it.

I'm reading a book that was given to me by Father Larry. You know that guy, my good friend. He gives me books to make me better. What are friends for, right? It's a book by Fr. Mark O'Keefe, who's a Benedictine monk, who specializes in Teresa of Avila.

Fr. Mark is part Chinese - and Spaniard. Interesting mix.

He writes about Teresa of Avila. And this particular book is about her focus on the intimacy of prayer and how that developed in her life. And it's a long life – almost 70 years.

That's in part what even led me to reflect this way. She built that intimacy over a long period of time. And even had encounters with the Lord, Jesus.

Yes. She's a saint and we're not. Okay. But she did it because of her love of God and her love of her sisters, the Discalced Carmelites.

Ponder that relationship this week. Actually, don't just ponder it. Go to the Lord. Or allow the Lord to come to you. And see what grows from it.

May it renew your Covenant that began a long time ago, when you were baptized.