

Parish Mission: Peace with God, Self, and Others
Father Art Cooney, Cap. and Judy Troxell
March 23-25 7:30pm in Church
Music by Mr. Bill Richart

From The Pastor

Please note our Parish Mission coming up in just two weeks. It proves to be a spiritually enriching opportunity that will offer preaching, healing, forgiveness and humor. Father Art Cooney is well known around the Detroit area and the many places he has traveled in his retreat work. Father Art and Judy Troxell have worked together for many years in this ministry and offer a lively and inspiring presentation. Mr. Bill Richart is a widely known and traveled musician who has also worked with Father Cooney in the past. Plan on joining us for this rich Lenten offering. Bring your family and friends.

By design, the Lenten readings are a review of the history of our salvation. The high points of God's call, initiative, and action on our behalf are presented to remind us of how we have arrived in this day of our salvation. In the most condensed way, these themes are reflected in the Easter Vigil when we come to the pinnacle of the Church year and the fulfillment of God's promise of our redemption.

Through the course of Lent, we ponder the actions of God in the early covenants and challenges that engaged God and the people of Israel. Last Sunday, the first reading from the book of Genesis recalled the disorder of sin and the flood that reflected the healing of baptism and a new beginning. We pondered the temptation of Jesus in the desert that parallels the forty years it took the Israelites to find their way to God. They rebelled; Jesus obeyed.

This week we ponder the premier story of faith reflected in the one first called by God in a personal way. Abraham, who for years longed for a child with his wife Sarah, obeys God and goes to offer the child in sacrifice. The story is about the unconditional faith of Abraham and his complete trust in God. Isaac, his son, is the prefigurement of Christ, the Son of God who sacrificed his life for our sake.

In our faith, what are we willing to do for God? How far are we willing to trust what God is asking of us? Child sacrifice is not in God's plan, but what challenge of faith calls us to a deeper trust in the one who saves us?

For and against is a very common attitude of human interaction. We stand close to those who are for us, and we resist those who are against us. Where do we account God? For or against? As if a lawyer, Paul presents his argument. If God is for us, who can be against us? Perhaps this is the place of challenge for our faith. Have we not at one time or another thought of God as being against us? In time of trial or crisis, who has not thought that God must be somehow a part of our trouble?

In a rhetorical question, Paul makes his case. If God is for us (and He is) who can be against us? If God gave himself to us in the person of his Son, would God then condemn us? Of course not. If Christ died for us to save and set us free, would Christ then accuse us? No.

This is no question. Christ died for us out of love to unite us to the Father. Christ is all for us; in him, there is nothing against us. If fear or doubt questions this, look at the truths of faith. He who died for us is now alive and he intercedes for us to our heavenly Father. We are in Christ, and Christ is in God.

The Transfiguration is the revelation of divine glory in Jesus for the disciples to see and be strengthened in faith. More than this, the glory seen in Jesus is a glory that is to be known and seen in ourselves. Jesus alone is Lord, Son of God, and Savior. But the purpose of his saving us is that we might share in and reveal through ourselves the glory of God.

This, I believe, is what terrified the disciples so much. At times, when we come to the full understanding of something, it is too much. Seeing and knowing it all can lead to confusion and fear, especially in the things of God. The humanity of Jesus was glorified, revealing his divinity. This confirms for the disciples Jesus' identity as Messiah. Seeing more than they bargained for, they have that split second knowing that it would somehow include them.

Many people today have a transfiguration experience when, touched deeply in prayer, they feel overwhelmed and confused by the experience. They know they have been touched by God, but it is more than they can understand or express. They must wait for God to unfold the experience. Salvation history continues today when we open ourselves in trust to God, and God acts on our behalf in the promise of Jesus. God is absolutely for us with a love that surpasses all trials, fears, or failure. Rest in Him.

Father John Esper