

“Peace in the Midst of Your Storms”

2nd Sunday in Lent (Cycle C)

Gn 15:5-12, 17-18; Ps 27:1, 7-9, 13-14; Phil 3:17-4:1; Lk 9:28b-36

15 years ago, I had a serious medical issue hit me from out of nowhere.

Normally a very active, healthy guy, this really rocked my world.

Beyond it being a very real health scare, it also raised serious questions about my present and future career

Still in the military at that time, I was immediately medically grounded from flying.

And the odds of my returning to flying were far from promising.

Quality of life, career expectations, providing for my family, etc, etc

all suddenly had a big fat question mark next to them...

It was to be an 18-month ride filled with uncertainty.

One night, towards the beginning of this ordeal, I went to bed early.

- It was a stormy summer night, pouring rain and rolling thunder,
- and I thought it a good metaphor for my situation: one big, dark storm.

My world in turmoil and my stress level high, I began to pray:

- Father, I trust in You, you know I do, BUT
 - I really don't understand what's going on here
- Father, you know I have faith in You, BUT
 - I've been thinking and I'm not really seeing
 - anything good coming out of this situation!
- Father, I probably needn't remind you, BUT
 - I've got a family to provide for, a mortgage to pay,
 - children to raise, college to save for...
- Father you know I trust you, BUT
 - is this some kind of punishment? or maybe a test?
- On and on I prayed this way, proclaiming to God my trust in Him
 - yet in the next breath saying, “BUT...”
- Until finally it culminated with me praying something to the effect of:
- Father, you know I trust you, BUT
 - **could you please just tell me what the heck is going on here?!!**

Suddenly lightning struck (I kid you not) what seemed to be right outside my bedroom window

It was big and it was bright

and it came with a thunderclap so loud that it shook the house,
electricity on the whole block was knocked out.

And in that loud, echoing thunder I heard a strong clear voice in the very depths of my soul:

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD...! (Ps 46:10)

Be still and know that I am God.

And boy I tell you, I *was* still: mind, body and soul. God definitely had my undivided attention!

- Physically: I laid there without daring to so much as *twitch* a muscle
 - I was trying to not even make a sound breathing!
- Mentally: I stopped the incessant, anxiety-filled,
 - fear-of-the-unknown questioning
 - that had been racing thru my brain
- And then I opened my soul to the awesome, mysterious, powerful love of God. And it was then that I quickly learned:
 - There is a big difference between
 - proclaiming to have trust in God
 - yet worrying about the outcome
 - I saw that there is a big difference between
 - healthy concern... and worry
 - proclaiming to have faith in God
 - yet in essence, questioning the Wisdom of God
 - I felt challenged to follow the example of a troubled Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
 - where He asked God the Father that this Cup of suffering might be taken away
 - yet in His next breath said, “But not my will, but thine, be done.”
 - That night I prayed that prayer -- and I meant it -- and in that moment, I found Peace
 - True Peace, deep-down-inside peace
 - “peace in the midst of a storm” peace...

The moral of the story is pretty straightforward: Never argue with God in a thunderstorm...!

- **True faith in God brings Peace**
 - not an end to the struggles, the battles, the storms of life
 - but a deep inner Peace in the midst of those storms

In today's Gospel – (Luke 9) we read of Jesus' transfiguration,

Christ allowed a few of the Apostles to see him in his glorified state.

- Why did He do that?
- May be several reasons, but one reason was surely: to increase the faith of His Apostles'
- In the verses preceding this gospel passage: Jesus told them He must be
 - rejected, killed, raised on 3rd day. And, he added,
 - you must take up your cross too...
 - To say they didn't understand would be an understatement.
 - They'd witnessed Jesus calming the storm, casting out demons, feeding the 5,000
 - They even proclaimed him to be the Messiah,
 - But even then they were still thinking in an earthly sense
 - their mindset was that Jesus might be their earthly King,
 - liberating them from Roman oppression,
 - restoring Jerusalem to its glory of old...
 - This stuff about rejection and the cross simply did not fit.
 - If he was referring to crucifixion,
 - that treatment was for the worst of the worst, deeply humiliating,
 - not to mention an *extremely* torturous means of execution.
 - And the thought of them "taking up their own crosses..."?
 - That was likely equally confusing if not terrifying as well.
- And so Jesus reveals His glory to them as we read today.
 - Note Jesus does not explain everything to them, why things are as they are
 - but He simply reveals there is definitely something more to His kingship than they'd previously understood.
 - Seeing Jesus in this supernatural glorified state did not answer all their questions, but it did increase their *trust* in him.
 - This strengthening of their faith was necessary for them to be able to face the major storms that were to come...

Likewise today Paul hits on faith in his letter to the Philippians (2nd reading)

- Paul tells us there is more to life than our earthly struggles.
- He warns us to not be like those whose minds are "*occupied with earthly things*"
 - those whose "god is their stomach" – ("feed me" mentality)
- Paul gives us hope, reminding us that "our citizenship is in heaven"

- And one fine day our lowly bodies will also be transformed
 - to a glorified state (like Jesus).
- So, he concludes, “hold fast” to your *faith* in God.

In our OT readings we also see the importance of faith

- 1st Reading (Gen 15) God revealed to Abram
 - his descendants will be numerous as the stars
 - Abram didn't understand how this could be. He was an old man and did not yet have any children...
 - God's promise sounded far-fetched if not impossible...
 - Even so, *“Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness”*
 - Abram's faith was pleasing to God

And then in our Responsorial Psalm (27)

- David sings a song brimming with faith:
 - *“The Lord is my light & my salvation, whom shall I fear?”*
- Finishes by challenging us:
 - *“Wait for the Lord with courage! Be stouthearted and wait for the Lord!”*

Yes, Life here on planet Earth is far from perfect – we all know that

- from our personal lives to world stage

We live in a world literally ravaged by sin

- Sin is the ultimate source of our suffering.
- When sin entered humanity thru Adam & Eve,
 - it tore the very fabric of our peaceful lives,
 - separating us from God
 - bringing us conflict, pain, struggle, heartache and death

But praise God -- that's not the end of the story! (amen?) Our loving God sought to repair our broken relationship!

- Today we read of God's covenant with Abram
 - (for the over 100 of you participating in our “Doors of Mercy” series
 - you'll study this in more detail this coming week)
 - this covenant with Abram was just one of a number of covenants God made w/ us

- Unfortunately, we repeatedly broke those covenants... so ultimately,
- Jesus would come and establish the “new and everlasting Covenant”
 - which we celebrate at every Mass
- In the Gospel also we see Jesus conversing with Moses & Elijah
 - and we recognize the symbology
 - Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law of Moses,
 - and the fulfillment of OT prophecies of Elijah and the other prophets.
 - But Jesus is also the fulfillment of Grace
 - When Moses & Jesus speak of an exodus,
 - it reminds us of Moses leading his people
 - in an exodus from Egyptian slavery
 - But it points to: Jesus, the New Moses, who was about to lead His people
 - in a spiritual exodus from the slavery to sin and death!
 - He did this thru His Passion & Resurrection
 - which we prepare to celebrate next month,
 - fittingly the *highest* point of our liturgical year.

Today, as we continue on our Lenten journey:

- we’re reminded we spend our earthly lives
 - navigating thru a broken world
 - a world with uncertainty & struggle
- There are crosses in this life, we’re all called to bear them.

But, my friends, it’s not all doom & gloom... In fact, it’s far from it!

For with faith we see that this world, this life is far from the end –

- it’s actually only the beginning!

With faith we can look forward with great hope

- knowing the ultimate victory has already been won by Christ in His great Passion.
- Now even death itself is to be born to eternal life
 - *O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?* (1 Cor 15:55)

This faith gives us great hope, indomitable optimism,

- and, thru it all... deep inner peace – that serene peace of Christ that we wish for each other when we say, “Peace be with you” in the Mass

With faith in God we can say as St. Paul did in his letter to the Romans

- *“...I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18)*

Our earthly lives bring us many hardships and causes for concern

- whether it be: money, health, job, marriage, addiction
 - children falling away from the church
 - sickness and death, on & on
- But let us not be fearful, not be filled with anxiety and worry...

Instead, may we always be “stouthearted and courageous” like David:

- Fight the good fight (1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7)
- Run so as to win (1 Cor 9:24)
- And I challenge you to pray in faith all along the way, saying
 - “Thy kingdom come, THY will be done...”
 - “not my will, but THINE Lord Jesus...”
- For when you have true faith in God
 - it is there that you will find
 - Peace in the midst of your storms...