

From Temptation to Glorification

Last week we heard the gospel of the testing of Jesus in the wilderness. This week we hear the gospel of his transfiguration. Last week we saw Jesus in all his humanity tested and tempted by Satan. This week we see him radiating the glory of God. These two gospels are a study in contrast. One draws our attention to the humanity of Jesus, the other to his divinity. One reminds us Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are though without sin. The other reminds us of the resurrection glory that lies before Jesus and before us! These two gospels—the gospel of Jesus’ temptation and the gospel of his transfiguration—summarize the Christian life and our Lent journey.

For, we are always standing between the promise and its fulfillment. We are always standing between temptation and glory. We are always standing between who we are and who we are meant to be. For example, at the present time we find ourselves beset by testing and temptation as was Jesus. Why should follow in the way of discipleship? Doesn’t it make more sense to succumb to the spirit of this age? Why not be like everyone else? Perhaps the devil is right: if we bow down and worship him, he will give us everything in return.

But in today’s second reading St. Paul reminds us of our Christian destiny. He points to the glory that lies before us. Addressing the Philippians at a moment when he was imprisoned and in danger of being put to death, the great apostle writes: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body.” Consider what that great

apostle is saying: Christ will change our earthly body, which is subject to decay and corruption, and it will be exactly like his own glorified body that is no longer subject to decay or corruption. What is Christ, we will become. The glory that Christ enjoys is the glory that lies before us.

Andy Warhol once said that everyone will have fifteen minutes of fame, fifteen minutes when everybody's attention will be focused on us. Too many people, however, settle for fifteen minutes of fame. The fullness of life for them is that bizarre moment when they stand before a television camera with eyes of the world on them. But as followers of the crucified Christ we know better. As followers of the crucified Christ we see beyond the sham and emptiness of what the world calls glory and praise. As followers of the crucified Christ, we need not settle for fifteen minutes of fame because we have the hope of resurrection glory.

Because St. Paul was confident he would share in the resurrection glory of Christ he was not afraid to die, even when he knew death was close at hand. Because he conformed himself to the crucified Christ he called others to imitate him. Imitate me in suffering with Christ and for Christ, he says. For when we suffer with and for the crucified Christ, we can be confident we will live with the risen Christ.

Lent is a time of renewal and purification so that so that we can celebrate the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection: what we call the Paschal Mystery. Do not let this time of grace pass you by. Conform yourself to the crucified Christ so that you will live with the risen Christ.