

February 28, 2010

Earlier this month, I returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Unlike a tour, a pilgrimage is centered in prayer and in a desire to encounter God more deeply at the holy sites. Lent is a kind of pilgrimage. During the 40 days, we engage ourselves more deeply in prayer so that Jesus really becomes the desire of our heart. We invite Jesus to teach us more about God, about ourselves, and how our true peace and happiness is found in doing the will of our Heavenly Father.

The Gospel at this weekend's Masses can be very inspirational for us. It is St. Luke's account of the Transfiguration of Jesus. St. Luke tells us that Jesus took Peter, John, and James up the mountain to *pray*. His purpose in prayer was to be in communion with His Father. St. Luke gives us many examples of Jesus at prayer (Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 11:1; 22:41). Each example is worthy of our reflection.

Adam sinned through disobedience. Jesus' entire preoccupation was to do the will of His Father. He *prayed* in order to listen to the Father and discern the Father's will.

While Jesus was praying, "His face changed in appearance and His clothing became dazzling white." The privileged apostles got a glimpse of Jesus in glory in anticipation of His Resurrection.

With Jesus appeared Moses and Elijah. They represented the law and the prophets. Jesus was speaking with them about His forthcoming suffering and death, "His exodus."

We have here a highly symbolic portrait of all of salvation history. The law and the prophets pointed to the One who would come to overcome the alienation

of sin and death and reconcile us with God. Jesus, through His suffering, death, and resurrection, fulfilled all that had been hoped for in the Old Testament. He is Savior. He is the Lord of all history. He achieved His glory and ours because of His faithful perseverance in accomplishing His Father's will.

Peter spoke up as usual: "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Peter wanted a shortcut to salvation. Life was yet to be lived. The cross must first precede the resurrection.

While Peter was speaking, a cloud came over them and from the cloud, a voice said: "This is my chosen Son; listen to Him."

The Father is reminding us, once again, that Jesus and Jesus alone holds the key to human fulfillment. Lent is a journey which helps us sharpen our focus on Jesus and keeps Him as Lord in our heart. Our Lenten practices remind us that our desire to encounter God amid our many responsibilities in life is found by keeping our eyes on Jesus and opening our hearts to His love.