

## Second weekend of Lent 2021

A Reflection on the scriptures by Fr Sylvester O'Flynn OFM Cap., Rochestown, Cork

### Listen to Him

Lent takes us from last Sunday's encounter with Satan in the wilderness to this Sunday's vision of the transfigured Lord on the mountain (Mark 9:2-10). Jesus took three apostles, Peter, James and John with him up a high mountain where they could be alone. From a mountain height one gets a panoramic view of the winding of rivers, the meeting of roads, the outline of fields and coastline. It is an experience that opens up the mind. The poet, William Blake, described it like this.

*"Great things happen when men and mountain meet*

*This is not done while jostling in the street."*

#### Holy Mountains



It is not surprising that, in the bible, mountains are associated with divine encounters. It was on a mountain that Moses received the commandments, Elijah experienced a mystical meeting with God, and Jesus delivered the great sermon which is the charter of Christian living. On a high mountain Peter, James and John were granted a new understanding of Jesus. They got a little glimpse of his divine glory. They had to come down from the height but memory kept the experience alive. These three apostles needed this supportive memory when they witnessed the dreadful agony of Jesus in Gethsemane.

Later, as pillars of the early Church they experienced many difficult times. The Second Letter of Peter lets us know how they tapped into this precious bank of memory. "We were with him on the holy mountain". We must treasure our moments of insight and tap into the bank of golden memories when the going is hard. The

voice from above which the apostles heard affirmed the identity of Jesus and the importance of listening to his teaching. "This is my Son the Beloved. Listen to him".

#### Listen to him

In this technological age, on social media there are many voices competing for our attention. Remember that Jesus warned us that when the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit. Some of this false leadership has serious consequences. As in Hitler's time, there are false prophets who are whipping up feelings of discontent, social anger, homophobia and racist prejudice. This has become the age of post-truth when people lap up conspiracy theories to deny election results, the reality of climate change, Covid-19

vaccination and the legitimacy of the papacy of Pope Francis. Truth may be silenced for a while but it cannot die.

### **Who guides me?**

Lent is a good time for asking ourselves who directs our lives. As the psalm reminds us, the Lord is the Good Shepherd who guides us along the right path. Whose voice do we follow?

We are quite aware how much our physical diet affects our state of health. But are we equally sensitive to the effects of our mental diet on our spiritual life? Anybody who feeds the mind with pornography or noisy, violent films is asking for trouble.

A serious Lent will mean cutting back on the time we give to compulsive radio, obsessive television and internet addiction. Some people recommend a Digital Detox Day once a week. Even a Digital Detox Hour each day might be a good start. We need to relearn how to listen to God, to listen attentively to other people and even to listen to our own inner feelings. To listen with attention is the first step in loving.

### **Mother Teresa's Business Card**

When Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta became internationally known she met with many world leaders. She was handed many Business Cards with the promise of financial help if she needed cash for any project. In return, she would give her own Business Card... five short lines. "The fruit of silence is prayer: the fruit of prayer is faith: the fruit of faith is love: the fruit of love is service: the fruit of service is peace." Everybody seeks inner peace. The path to peace begins with silence creating space for prayer ... which inflames faith ... thereby inspiring love ... which reaches out in service. Peace then comes because it is in giving that we receive.

Pray for the gift of silent listening. In our technological world of today it is hard to listen attentively. People flee from silence by turning up the volume or inserting earphones.

Many years ago the poet, T.S.Eliot, wrote that we have "Knowledge of speech, but not of silence/ Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word." His observation is far truer today.

### **Your inner chapel**

It's easy for me, living in a religious community with a beautiful chapel, to write about silence. But do try to find your own inner chapel. You might profit from learning about breath control and muscular relaxation to create an inner space. Remember what Jesus said: "When you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place" (Matt 6:6). God is within you, waiting for you just as Jesus was waiting for the troubled woman at the well in Samaria.

One final thought. If you think God is a million miles away, guess who moved!

### **Prayer of the day**

God our Father, help us find our inner room where we can listen to your Beloved Son. Enlighten us with your word so that we may find the way to share in your glory. Amen.