

Lent 2

1. Unlike last week's readings which presented us with the contrast between the first couple's fall to sin and Jesus' victory over it, this week's readings all seem to have the same theme, change.

2. The topic of change is very much in the air these days at among the democratic candidates for the presidency. But even without the presidential race we are familiar with this topic. In fact, we have to admit that change is a fact of life. In fact, change seems to rule our lives. True, there are things in our lives which don't seem to change, and we need these things very badly. Without them we would not have an identity. We would have to recreate ourselves each day. We need roots. We need people, places and things which perdure throughout our lives. For example, no matter how old we get or how far we travel, our parents don't change. Yes, they may now be dead. But that they were our parents, that they lived at such and such a time and in such and such a place, that they brought us into the world there

and then and afterwards exposed us to these circumstances and situations, these opportunities and limitations—all that cannot change. They are non-changeable. They give us our identity. They make us who we are.

3. But almost everything else in our lives is permeated with change. Our lives are in a constant state of change. For example, the fact that we live in time means that we can never stand still. I am the same person who had such and such an experience yesterday, but I am a different person today precisely because I had that experience yesterday.

4. True, some people's lives change more drastically than others. Look at Abram in today's first reading. He is told by God to leave his family and land. In other words, Abram is here told to give up the realities that gave him his identity, his country and his family. He is told to become an immigrant. His experience has been repeated down through the centuries. Think of what our forefathers gave up when they migrated to this new country. Think of today's immigrants who undergo this same wrenching experience.

Perhaps we would have more sympathy for them if we kept in mind what our forefathers experienced when they first came to this new land.

5. It was God who summoned Abram to this change of country and family, and it is the same God who has now revealed himself to us in Jesus and in him calls us to the most fundamental change of all, our own transfiguration after our deaths. That is the meaning of this Gospel scene. Here the disciples caught a glimpse of Jesus clothed in the new life and glory which will be his after his suffering and death. What Jesus experienced here in this transfiguration and later in his resurrection is promised to us who believe in him. Thus in the preface from the Mass for the Dead we pray: “*Tuis enim fidelibus, Domine, vita mutatur, non tollitur.*” For your faithful ones, Lord, life is changed, not ended. This will be the life of the world to come, the life of the risen ones.

6. Our prejudice today is to believe that everyone will experience this final change. But the traditional teaching of

our church says that only the good, only those who have tried to change their lives in this world for the better, will experience it. But let us leave this question to the mercy of God. However, at the same time let us strive to change ourselves for the better here and now. For if we do that, God will do the rest.

7. What we might also want to ask for is the grace to see what needs changing in our minds and hearts. So often our eyes are blurred in our own cases. So often habit blinds us so that we cannot see what is obvious to others about ourselves. This is why Ignatius insisted on the daily examination of conscience, a review of our day to see how it has been, what we have said and done, and whether it was good or bad. And in this matter the best guide we can make use of is the one offered in today's Gospel. We should listen to Jesus and also ask him: What do you want me to do? When we do that, our lives will begin to change. We will begin the process of our own transfiguration.