

New Brighton, Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

“Arise, and do not be afraid<sup>1</sup>.” “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear Him<sup>2</sup>.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

This well-known vision of Jesus in his glory that we called transfiguration was necessary to us, as we started our penances ten days ago. We read on Thursday after Ash Wednesday the prayer of Hezekiah, King of Juda, who was sick to death, and was told by Isaias that he was going to die:

“Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord: O Lord, remember how faithfully and wholeheartedly I conducted myself in Your presence, doing what was pleasing to You! And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the Lord came to Isaias: Go, tell Hezekiah: Thus says the Lord, the God of your father David: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life. I will rescue you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; I will be a shield to this city, says the Lord almighty<sup>3</sup>.”

With Ember Days, last Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, the Church reminded us how to practice penance and, through our prayers, beg the Lord to forgive our sins and failures.

Today, after ten days spent on mourning upon our faults, we are offered the joy to contemplate Our Lord in his glory. We contemplate Him in the intimacy of our soul, because he is not risen again, and he told us to “Tell the vision to no one, till the Son of Man has risen from the dead<sup>4</sup>”.

This vision of Jesus is the promise of our redemption if we keep this path of sufferings and prayers, to unite our life to His, to unite our cross to His, to unite our will to His. To go a little bit further, we have to say, to die to ourselves, for Him to live in us.

This might seem a bit extreme, but why should we refuse that to Jesus who gave everything he had to save us from the eternal torments of Hell? The glory of the resurrection is only made possible through our death to sin, and life by Christ, which means complete abandon of our life into his hands. This extremity might scare us a little bit, and that’s the reason we hear the voice of the Father saying: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear Him<sup>5</sup>.” “Arise, and do not be afraid<sup>6</sup>.”

This fear we are told to not give up to, is the fear of the slave, not the one of the sons of God. The fear of the slave, of the servant, is the fear of punishment. The fear of God, one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, is the respectful love without boundaries we must attain to live

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<sup>1</sup> Mt., XVII, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Mt., XVII, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Is., XXXVIII, 2-6.

<sup>4</sup> Mt., XVII, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Mt., XVII, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Mt., XVII, 7.

with God forever. This divine fear is the one of the saints who constantly contemplate Christ in his eternal transfiguration.

This Fear of God, this respectful love makes us fulfil the commandments, not only because we are afraid of the punishment to be separated from the Lord and doomed forever, but moreover because it pleases God, and prepares us to be united with Him in his eternity. This thought brings us such happiness, that we keep going on, listening the Son of Man and doing whatever he asks us, according to the word of His Father in Heaven: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear Him”.

Following the commandments doesn't seem pleasant at first sight, as they look like a series of commands and forbidden thing: do this, don't do that. However, the fulfilling of the commandments fits so well our humanity, that we find in them the guidelines to life everlasting, and instead of looking down to them, we elevate them above us as they come from the supreme good to obtain. The initial fear we had for fulfilling them is transfigured by the grace of the Lord and makes us desire to hear more about them. They are the voice of the Lord; they are the words we are told this morning to hear from Him. They are telling us, He is telling us, to renounce our human self-will and love, and attach us forever to the eternal good which is promised to us with the vision of the transfiguration.

“Then it is the total holocaust in which, according to Saint Gregory, the renunciant sacrifices all that he possesses, all that he lives for and all that he loves. Anyone who has reached this point has established himself in joyful security: the vicissitudes of this world no longer have any hold on him. He possesses something of eternal peace<sup>7</sup>.”

The people in the world are not due to imitate the complete renouncement of the monks, who does not materially possess anything on this earth. But

“He must not abandon his heart to the treachery of this trap. A sensitive mark of his disinterestedness will be his facility to come to the aid of his neighbour in one of the thousand forms that Christian charity takes, according to the times, provided that his generosity is dictated by the central sentiment demanded by the Gospel: renunciation. It is only when he reaches this master disposition that, having thoroughly penetrated the teachings of Jesus Christ, he will come very close to the practice of the monks, and will make great strides towards self-denial, which is even more essential, and forms one of the foundations of holiness<sup>8</sup>.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

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<sup>7</sup> Dom Paul Chauvin, Saint Benoît nous parle, Chp. 8, « renoncer », translated with [www.deepl.com](http://www.deepl.com).

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