

2nd Sunday of Lent - C
Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18;
Philippians 3:7-4:1;
Luke 9:28b-36
Little Flower - 3/17/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

First of all, I want to wish all of you a very blessed and happy St. Patrick's Day.

Just as the Gospel on the First Sunday of Lent is always the story of Jesus' forty-day fast in the desert and his temptations by the devil, the Gospel on the Second Sunday of Lent is always the story of his transfiguration. At his transfiguration, Jesus gives us a glimpse of his resurrected glory and also a glimpse of the glory that will one day be ours as well.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus proclaimed that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and the Prophets. More importantly, God the Father validated Jesus: "*This is my chosen Son; listen to him.*" Jesus' transfiguration helped to prepare his disciples for his impending suffering, death, and resurrection.

When I was studying in Rome, now Cardinal Raymond Burke gave me an article to read entitled "Morality and the Paradigmatic Individuals." The article discussed a philosophy according to which people made their moral decisions by asking themselves what the best person they knew would do in a given situation. Although we have a strong tradition of moral law and deductive reasoning, it seems to me that both today's Gospel and today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Philippians really support the idea of following the example of paradigmatic individuals, in these readings Jesus and Paul.

When God the Father told the disciples to listen to Jesus, he, in effect, was telling them not just to listen to his words but to follow his example. A few years ago everyone wore "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelets. In other words, Jesus is the paradigmatic model for us. Of course, because we live 2000 years later in a very different world, we cannot simply copy his example. Living in a very different world from the world in which he lived sometimes makes it very difficult to know what he would do specifically. However, what we can do is make our own his attitudes and values and strive to live them in our lives.

To the Philippians, Paul wrote, "*Join with others in being imitators of me, ... and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us.*" Paul basically was telling them to follow his example and the example of those who followed his example. In this passage, Paul is challenging us to find good role models and to strive to follow their example. Who are our role models? Who are our heroes? Do we ever stop and ask ourselves what our role models and heroes would do if they were in the situation in which we find ourselves?

At the same time, we also need to ask ourselves who are our friends and with whom do we spend most of our free time. The people with whom we surround ourselves influence us far more than we often realize. One of my high school classmates often said, "Tell me who you go with, and I'll tell you who you are." In other words, we are not only influenced by those whom we consciously choose as role models and heroes but also by those people with whom we surround ourselves and whom we choose as friends.

At the same time, we are also called to be role models and heroes to others, especially to the young people whose lives we influence or seek to influence. This is why I have so often said, "Children learn what they live and live what they learn."

My brothers and sisters, in Genesis, God made a quasi-covenant with Abram. Jesus established a new covenant of love between God and us. When we were baptized, we were baptized into this covenant, this relationship, of love. To live as God's sons and daughters is to respond to God's love for us by modeling our lives on Jesus' self-revealing, self-giving, self-sacrificing love for us. As St. Therese said, "Love is repaid by love alone."