

## Homily for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent

Years ago, on one of my summer breaks from college, I went on a trip out west with several friends on a road trip. One of the national parks we visited was Zion National Park in southwest Utah, perhaps one of the most beautiful places on earth. Anyway, while we were there, we got the great idea to go hiking – that is, mountain climbing. We found a trail map of the park, and then started hiking up one of the highest pinnacles to a place called, Angel’s Landing – you can just imagine how it got its name! It was supposed to be a steep hike and a moderate climb – and we figured we could handle it. Well, we finally made it to what we thought was the place where the angels came to rest, only to learn that we had to scale the side of the mountain with the help of a guide rope. It must have been a drop of several hundred feet. Anyway, two out of the three of us proceeded, hearts pounding all the while. And after an eternity, we finally arrived to this plateau, and as we looked out, saw the most beautiful view I had ever seen. I really felt that God was very close to me at that moment. It was as though He was saying to me, “That was difficult, but here’s the special reward for you for your labors.”

Well, not to be outdone, our Scripture readings today point out the three most famous of mountain climbers: Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Moses climbed Mount Sinai, where he received the Ten Commandments. Elijah climbed Mount Horeb, where he heard God’s “still small voice” speaking to him as a prophet. And finally, Jesus climbed the mountain called Calvary, where He died on the cross to save us from our sins. But, it’s in our Gospel today that we hear how these three mystically appear on Mount Tabor, as Jesus is brilliantly transfigured before them. The three of them, then, representing the Law, the Prophets, and the Kingdom of God, show in a very unified way how God was saving His people, stretching from Moses and Elijah, and now reaching fulfillment in Jesus, His Son.

Mountains. Isn't it true that we all have our own personal mountains? I don't mean those places in life full of excitement, where we get a great view or perspective. But rather those places that have us climbing so steep they can just seem too high to conquer. Maybe these are struggles with some kind of dependency you have, or maybe gossip or even pornography; perhaps it's some type of emotional or psychological wound from the past. Or, maybe it's a physical or financial problem, or simply that relative who has perfected every way of just being difficult. To deal with these challenges, we often try a whole host of things. And sometimes we can try and try and try, and feel like we're spinning our wheels. But, whatever the challenge, **if we take it up** and continually renew our trust in God to help us in the very moment of difficulty, He will provide for us.

We remember that if God is with us, what could possibly keep us from finding true peace and happiness in Him? "Nothing," St. Paul says. Nothing can keep us from the love of God – neither persecution nor pain, nor suffering, nor anything else, can destroy His loving presence with us.

Nothing we could ever do could change the fact that the Father truly loves us. But, we ourselves can put obstacles in the way. In fact, through the choices we make each day, we either move closer to God or further away from Him.

During this season of Lent, we are called to remember that life is ultimately meant to be a journey of faith *towards* God. But in order to find Him, we have to become willing to climb the mountains that we each face in life, not try to find ways around them. The secret we will find in the climb is that without God's help we will probably give up – it's just too hard on our own. But with Him, and only with Him, ultimately, we can reach the top. And then, through the difficulties, challenges, and even suffering that looked like they were keeping us from God all along, we will find Him more clearly by having passed through them. God bless you.