

**Homily for March 16, 2003
2nd Sunday Lent B**

By Father Charles Bowes

**Genesis 22:1-1, 9a, 10-13, 15-18
Romans 8:31b-34
Mark 9:2-10**

What does resurrection mean for us in our day?

Apparently, in the early Jewish-Christian church, there was controversy over who would be the prophet foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 18, who was to lead the people in the final days when God would make all things right and complete.

According to some traditions, Elijah was to be this prophet. So along comes this scene in Mark chapter 9, claiming that Jesus was the one foretold, fulfilling the mission prefigured by Moses and Elijah. Thus it is that both of those figures appear with Jesus on the mountaintop. The mountaintop, of course, is a typical location for such visionary themes in the Old Testament. And the disciples? Peter, James and John very likely represent the prophetic members of that early Jewish-Christian community who made the claim about the significance of Jesus. They made the claim that in meeting Jesus, one was meeting no less than God and that Jesus was the final prophet announcing the revelation of God's will for creation.

Notice that the story doesn't end where Peter and the rest of us would like it to: "Let's stay here awhile, Lord, let's build something a little more permanent and

stick around in this ecstasy." In fact, there may very well have been folks in that early Jewish-Christian community who expected the end time to come almost right away - Saint Paul among them in his early writings. Saint Mark's gospel refuses to settle for such a vision. For him and his community, the destiny of Jesus involved death and resurrection as well as the task of the community to discover what all this meant for their existence. Hence, the question as they come down the mountain...they continued to talk about what resurrection from the dead meant. Indeed, we talk about it to this very day.

In other words, when we hear about Jesus' death and resurrection, we can't stop with the vision of some glory that was achieved centuries ago. We press on to discover what our true destiny entails, what our sharing in that life of Jesus means in our day. The Jesus portrayed in Saint Mark's gospel is saying that for those who would identify with him, the future has not yet come; that in order to enter into the future glory, one must go through one's destiny of discipleship - we have to come down the mountain, live today, walk the talk.

The task of discipleship for Saint Mark's community was to continue to discuss what resurrection from the dead means. So often, it seems, Christians today have stopped on the mountain in

declaring that Jesus has risen. That's just not the entire meaning of the destiny of Jesus. For the resurrection is not Jesus' alone. If the resurrection means anything, it is that those who follow Jesus can go hopefully into suffering and death. We, in our day, continue to discuss the resurrection, not just with words, but also with the witness of our lives.

This future for which we pray as we plan for our parish convocation in May, just what does that future hold for us? What sacrifices will it entail? And this peace for which we pray - peace with a human face - the faces of those names are in our book at the shrine of Mary who are in active duty military service - what shape will that peace take? How will we be involved in shaping that peace concretely?

Something of the spirit of this gospel message, I think, is captured in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., who said: "If a man hasn't discovered something that he would die for, he isn't fit to live."

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