

Second Sunday of Lent
Cycle C - March 7, 2004
By Father Charles Bowes

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Luke 9:28-36

The power people saw in Jesus is present now in you and in me.

It's obvious from the gospels that the people around Jesus expected him to do all kinds of things. They hoped he would change their situation, that he would better the world. That was, in a way, even what the devil wanted him to do: change the stones of this world into bread, interrupt the laws of gravity and be famous, take over political power and rule as no one ever ruled before.

That is what his disciples expected him to do. That is what all his followers wanted him to do, and they brought him their sick, the crippled, the mentally deranged, their children, and their worries.

The expectancy that had been growing around John the Baptist was now concentrating around Jesus to the extent that they expected miracles and wonders right, left, and center. In the gospel of today, Luke 9, Jesus took Peter, James, and John aside. He told them: "Come with me, I will show you something." They followed him excitedly, proud to be chosen, sure of themselves. He brought them up that mountain and, again, heaven opened, Moses and Elijah were seen.

Their expectations grew almost wild. Was the change going to come? Weren't Moses and Elijah the great experts on change and development? Wasn't it

Moses who had brought his people from Egypt into the new land? Wasn't it Elijah who had changed his people from an old-fashioned, sinful one into a glorious nation?

The three must have been sure it was about to start: a totally new world - a totally new cosmos - economically wealthy, technologically robust, and politically full of peace, love, and unity.

They looked at him while he was discussing this changeover, this Passover with Moses and Elijah. Suddenly the change did start, but the grass didn't grow more lush. The trees didn't grow bigger fruit. The rain didn't fall more abundantly. The sun didn't get any brighter. It was he who changed. It was Jesus who started to shine - he, the son of humanity, the model for all.

In this way, he made it clear to them - those privileged three and we who read this report - what should happen to this world. We, humankind, are to change as a result of the power of the Spirit released through Jesus' death and resurrection. We, and the disciples, are not to remain apart, isolated, wrapped up in our own spirituality. Rather, we are to go down the mountain, externally seemingly unchanged...but transformed through the availability of God's Spirit revealed in Jesus.

The Christian journey is a lifelong project. Sometimes it's dramatic and exciting. More often it's routine and mundane. Occasionally it stagnates, and at times it can be hard, confusing, and even painful. During this journey, Jesus will, from time to time, invite us to go to a place apart, just as he invited the disciples to climb the mountain. The invitation can come in very particular ways in our lives. A pilgrimage perhaps, or a retreat. More often, the invitation comes through the more "ordinary" elements of Christian life, especially through the liturgical rhythm of the Church's life. Lent has a very special place in this respect. We are invited to climb a mountain. That may be a struggle, but if Jesus is inviting us, then there is something he wants to offer us. We may recognize it immediately, or it may only become clear to us later. But the gift will be there - a gift we celebrate here and at every Eucharist.

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present now in you and in me.