

# ***HIC EST FILIUS MEUS DILECTUS. AUDITE ILLUM***

*A Sermon for the Second Sunday of Lent (B)*

*St Paul's Parish, Gävle, Sweden*

*Texts: Gen. 22: 1-2.9a.10-13.15-18; Ps 115; Rom 8: 31b-34; Mark 9:2-10.*

***"This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him"***. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what we have just heard are two related sentences. The first is an affirmation. The second is a command. Both of them came from "a voice from the cloud". The three close disciples who were on the high mountain with the Lord Jesus were the immediate persons to whom the words were addressed. In their hearts, they believed that God the Father spoke those words. The dramatic event on the mountain, and especially those words, became for those three men from Galilee, who had left their fishing nets and family to follow Jesus, a moment of honour and glorification for Jesus by God the Father. St Peter attests to this: ***"He was honoured and glorified by God the Father, when a voice came to him from heaven the transcendent Glory, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour'. We ourselves heard this voice from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain"***(2 Pt 1:17-18).

Dearest brothers and sisters, the deep meaning that is revealed in the event on the mount and our obligation to obey the command that follows have their footprints in the moving story recounted in the First Reading. The man of faith, Abraham, is shown to us. We are told that God put him to the test. He was told to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, who was born to him in his very old age. Certainly that was not an easy command to obey. This Lent offers us a new opportunity to pray for a renewed and deeper faith. Beyond teaching us to imitate the faith of Abraham, however, we are to see this story as a symbol of the very deed of love for our salvation by the Son of God. For as Jesus Christ is the Only Son of God the Father, so was Isaac, by analogy, the only son of Abraham. The death of Isaac as a sacrifice even in obedience to God would not have won salvation for us, since Isaac is merely a figure of ***the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us (cf. Gal 2: 20b)***. Just as Abraham is shown as being ready even not to spare his only son, so, as the Apostle teaches us today, ***"...God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all"***(Rom. 8:32).

Abraham got the courage and strength to do everything that God asked him to do because he was faithful to the covenant God had made with him. That covenant was strengthened by the giving of the Law through Moses and kept alive by the words, which God spoke through the prophets. The prophets told our forefathers in the faith repeatedly that God would make a new covenant with their descendants (Cf. Jere. 31:31). And when the appointed time came, God kept his promise. He sent His Only Son. The everlasting Son of God became a member of the human family in time and through his death and resurrection he made the promised New and everlasting covenant with all the descendants of Abraham.

Through the Sacrament of baptism we all have become partakers in this New Covenant. Like our father Abraham we are challenged to live a life of living faith in, and total obedience to the will of, God.

All around us there are conflicting voices, all competing to get our attention. But the lesson we learn today is clear: God our Father has told us the One we should listen to: His name is JESUS CHRIST our Lord. This holy season of Lent is a time of God's favour, a time for transformation. It is the acceptable time to allow the grace of Christ to renew in us that glory of the "new creation" planted in us at baptism.

During this period of Lent, the Lord offers us all the best opportunities to cast away the deeds of

darkness. And in this parish we make that a reality for all who spare some time for Christ. I urge you all in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ, to spare some time, especially during this holy season, come to the Church, your church and together let us listen to the Beloved Son of God, our Saviour. Some people live in fear. For some, there is a good reason for this. For some, it is really baseless. The mystery of the Transfiguration was meant to strengthen the disciples before the passion of their Lord. For us today, it is meant to strengthen us in the face of all our trials and temptations. The same Jesus who was transfigured is always with us. At times we feel his presence. At other times, it seems he is far away. But he is in fact always present. He is always with us: to protect us, to console us and to bless us. We must not forget that the One who is always with us is the Almighty God – he is true God from true God. His presence and power to save is not measured by our feeling. It is guaranteed by his promise. And we all know that he is faithful. So, if anyone is afraid in anyway at all, the words of the apostle which we heard in the Second Reading are more than reassuring: **“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).**

*Help us, dearest Jesus, so that while we meditate on the miracle of the Transfiguration, our lives may be transformed into copies of you. Make us the true light of the world and salt to the earth. Amen.*

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