

LENTEN HOMILY

This time of the year is a glorious one in California's Central Valley. The cherry, apricot and other fruit trees along with those growing almonds and walnuts are in full, magnificent bloom. And it's still winter time! But as beautiful as these trees are right now, they are destined for something even more glorious in the fruit that they will bear in summer.

Peter, James and John were overwhelmed by the glory of Jesus in his transfiguration (Luke 9: 28b-36). And there he was standing between Moses and Elijah. This is the Jesus they wanted to follow, to be and stay with, not the one who said he was going to suffer and die in Jerusalem. And yet, this was what Jesus was discussing with those two great, powerful figures of Jewish history.

As well intended as they were, Peter and his companions were not unlike those who Paul referred to as having "minds that are occupied with earthly things (Philippians 3:17-4:1)." Paul saw such ones as "enemies of the cross of Christ" because what they longed for and were preoccupied with could not bring about the Kingdom of God that Jesus was proclaiming. They still hoped for the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham of an earthly reality (Genesis 15: 5-12, 17-18) whereas Jesus was offering hope for a whole new reality that would embrace human existence but go way beyond the limitations of this life – something more even more glorious than the consoling experience on Mt. Tabor.

The season of Lent provides us the opportunity to examine what it is we long and hope for in light of the paschal mystery of Christ. While our Christian faith offers us great consolation in the midst of the struggles of this life, it does not provide us an unrealistic escape from them. Rather we must fully enter into our human experience including the cross that must be borne each day. Moses, Elijah, Jesus, Paul and many others up to our own day have embraced this mystery and in doing so have discovered overwhelming beauty and glory of the summer of God's Kingdom. So as the wondrous springtime blossoms fall away, we await the great fruit that their trees will bear in the time ahead.

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