



“Those who do what is true come to the light” (Jn 3:21)

Reflections for Lent from the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN)

DOING WHAT IS TRUE

Our reflection for the second Sunday of Lent (1 March) is written by Fr Ted Rogers SJ, a British Jesuit who spent decades pioneering social change in Zimbabwe. He co-founded the Jesuit AIDS Project in 1997 to stem the destruction of AIDS by reaching young people through peer education.

Today, in the readings, we have the proposed sacrifice of Isaac and the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

God said to Abraham, “Take your son your only child Isaac, whom you love, to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering”. In those days it was not unusual for pagan tribes to offer human sacrifice but Abraham was very perplexed about this. Isaac was born to Abraham when he was 100 years old, when his wife Sarah thought she was too old for a child. So there was no chance of him having another son. And he obeyed the Lord and moved to sacrifice Isaac, his only son? But God was trying him to see the extent of his love. As we know, at the last moment when he lifted the knife, Abraham was told to stop. But ‘those who do what is true will come to the light’. Abraham thought he was being true to God’s word and so he came to the light.

We are all tested in some way or other to prove how we love God. But can we overcome these tests by trusting in God Himself?

I can offer another typical story which is true today. Children are left orphaned after both parents died as a result of their contracting AIDS. The children are then left in the charge of an uncle. He should have the children tested to see if they are HIV-positive but he neglects to do this because of the stigma he foresees: if any of them test positive he would have to acknowledge that there is AIDS in the family. He puts the family honour, as he sees it, above the children’s health. He is doing what is not true so he cannot come into the light.

Peter, James and John were asked to go with Jesus to the mountain top where He was transfigured before them. “His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.” They did not want to leave that place. Peter even spoke up and said, “Let us make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” They wanted to stay with Him for the rest of their lives.

When we experience consolation from the Lord, do we feel the same? But it is only after undergoing and overcoming the trials we have in this life that we can be with Jesus forever. Those who die due to HIV infection can still be with Him. And for so many, HIV infection is not the end; it can be the beginning of a new life in the spirit.

Peter, James and John were given the revelation of Christ's transfiguration to prepare them in faith for when their belief would be sorely tried by the torture and crucifixion of Jesus. This vision supports us too if we do what is true. And what is true? It is the teaching to love God and our neighbour. If we do this, we will come to the light, and see the glorified Christ in our time. If we are present and caring with those in need, we will be transfigured in a way that helps us get closer to Jesus Christ.