

## 2nd Sunday of Lent

Pilgrimage is one religious practice of the jubilee year of hope. Whether you come to this cathedral or another designated site, you set your eyes on a destination and make an effort to get there. Many of us make personal pilgrimages each year to visit people we want to see in person. When we are apart from ones we love, being in their presence again may require complicated plans, the inconvenience of travel, the loss of time, and the costs of provisions, but we do it. We can use some electronic method to stay in touch, but it never accomplishes all we experience when we see someone face to face.

Our responsorial psalm today gives us the reflections of a person who has made a pilgrimage to put their face before the Lord. They've come not just to be in the presence of someone they love. They need some favor, so they've come to the temple, the place where God dwells.

There, addressing God, the individual explains how they got there: "Of you my heart has spoken, 'Seek his face.'" Praying at home for this favor wasn't enough; a pilgrimage may bring better results. The person knows that other people needing a favor seek other solutions, even approaching false gods. Many people still resolve their problems the wrong way—with sinful entertainments or even violence. The verses of Psalm 27 say, "It is your face, O Lord, that I seek"—no one else's. If this problem is to get resolved, then the Lord is the one to do it.

Even so, you don't always get what you want. Sometimes God says no. The person praying this psalm seems to have had that experience and interprets it in a wrongheaded human way. Sometimes when people in authority say no to us, the message comes in anger. Psalm 27 fears that God may say no out of exasperation. It goes, "Hide not your face from me. Dismiss not your servant in anger; you have been my help."

In our daily lives, if someone quits responding to texts and email, we may feel ghosted. They've abruptly cut off communication, so we fear that they've dismissed us in anger. That's the fear in this psalm, that after God hears our petition, he may ghost us. Of course, we believe that does not happen. What seems like silence to us may seem deafeningly plain to God, offering a different solution than the one we had in mind.

We sing Psalm 27 today because of the gospel of the transfiguration. St. Luke says that while Jesus was praying, "his face changed in appearance." Peter, James and John found themselves at the destination of their pilgrimage, ascending the holy mountain where they beheld the face of Jesus as never before.

On pilgrimage in Lent we get this vision of our destination: the glory of the resurrection, albeit by means of the cross. Whenever we experience the cross of sorrow, we turn to God for favors. We believe what we sang as our refrain today, anticipating the account of the transfiguration: "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Psalm 27 prays, "Hide not your face from me," and in the gospel, Jesus goes to extremes to reveal his face to us, to reassure us on our path. Though we may have trouble interpreting the silence of God, we believe something more: the Lord is our light, the Lord is our salvation.