

THE JOY OF LEAVING THE FAMILIAR by Fr Josh Miechels

Homily for Second Sunday of Lent

The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing. How would you feel if God really said this to you? Our answer is often, God of course I love you, I want your blessings, I want to follow you, why can't I do it here, where I am?

But this is the question isn't it: do we love God? Maybe more accurately - how much do I love God? Because if we really love someone, there's not a lot we're not willing to do. Bokes make all kinds of sacrifices to get the attention of a lady - they desire her so much they hardly notice their sacrifices. But if even small sacrifices for God are such a great burden - do we really love God? Do we really desire him?

And what are we not willing to give up for God? Whatever that thing is, that's idolatry. That's what it is: as the Compendium reminds us, idolatry "divinises creatures" - puts created goods in the place of God. If I love God, as he is, in all he is, then there is nothing I won't give up.

What's really important is there is a second half to this. Being Christian is not simply giving up all for God. It's about giving it up so God can give me so much more. This is why God asks us to leave the familiar. To give us our heart's desire.

We can have a few objections to this - but these are simply answered:

Are you sure it will be wonderful? Hang on a second: are you seriously suggesting that your creator can't satisfy your heart's desire? That you, who are a limited sinner, give yourself something better than what he, who can do anything and is only pure good? And give yourself from what? We only ever have anything at all because everything, and our very being, is gift - from Him.

Why do I have to leave what I have? Because not leaving is being happy with what I now have. But each of us know in our heart - the more this sameness I have continues - the more unhappy I am with it. It is not enough.

Why does it hurt? Because, my friend, that is what it means to grow. Children who grow have growing pains. The new is always initially difficult.

So what are three ways God asks us to leave what we know and go somewhere new?

One: Make a tiny change to the way we live our life after every Sunday mass. If I go to Mass for 12 months, and never try to change anything in my life - spiritually, I am refusing to leave my homeland, and I am going backwards.

Two: Leave the ordinary of every day at least for 10 minutes to spend with the Lord for him to take me, spiritually, wherever he wants.

Three: Try to have at least half a day of retreat once a year. There are lots of groups who offer these - try one, even if you feel a bit afraid. God will meet you there.

