

2nd Sunday of Lent

Year B

The film *Dead Man Walking* tells the story of a religious sister, Helen Prejean, as she accompanies a man called Robert during the months leading up to his execution in Louisiana. Noticing how Robert tried to win the confidence of one of the wardens, who was a kind and fatherly figure, Sr Helen reflected

Robert never really had a father (His father spent 27 of his 53 years in prison). It makes me think of my own father. It has to be one of life's most precious feelings to know that your dad is proud of you. I was my daddy's scholar, who kept the travel diary on family holidays. He always had a special tone in his voice when he introduced me to friends and colleagues: 'And this is my little daughter, Helen'. In the presence of strangers I would fall silent, standing close against him, my hand holding on tightly to his. Afterwards I would squeeze his hand tighter than ever and teem once more with chatter and questions. A child can sail to the moon with that feeling of security from a father.

It may help us to understand something of what the tabor experience meant for Jesus. It came at a pretty difficult time in his life, a time of uncertainty and fear of the future. He was headed for Jerusalem, where he sensed that the same fate awaited him as befell all the prophets – a violent death. Naturally he recoiled from that ! In order to reflect on it and pray about it, he climbed to the top of Mount Tabor.

We don't know exactly what happened on the mountain. But it seems he had an intense experience of the presence of God. He heard those marvelous words: "You are my beloved Son". On Tabor Jesus felt himself comforted and affirmed. He knew that his Father was pleased with him, and would give him the strength to face a dark and threatening future. With God on his side, he could face anything.

At times life can become dark for all of us. There are lots of voices which say to us "You're good, but only if you're successful, or if you're clever or if you're popular". But there is still a small voice which whispers to us in our hearts: "You are my beloved son/daughter". This is the voice to which we need to pay attention.. We must recognize that we are God's beloved children, and try to live our lives by the light of this truth.

Jean Vanier has set up communities for the mentally handicapped. He tells how in one of those communities there is a man called Pierre who has a mental disability. One day somebody asked Pierre, "Do you like praying?"

"Yes, he answered.

"And what do you do when you pray?" the questioner asked.

"I listen", Pierre answered.

"And what does God say to you?"

"God says, 'Pierre, you are my beloved son'".

Project Compassion – with its outreach to the most disadvantaged in our world – reminds us that we are all God's beloved sons and daughters. The story of Rattanak at the front of "Seasons" points the way to the creation of a just and fair world: "Rattanak, you are my brother!"