

Second Sunday of Lent

Reading I: **Genesis 12:1-4a**
Reading II: **2 Timothy 1:8b-10**
Gospel: **Matthew 17:1-9**

In today's Gospel passage, we glimpse, through the eyes of three intimate friends and followers of Christ, the true glory of a humble carpenter from the obscure, seemingly unimportant town of Nazareth. The transfiguration of Jesus Christ high up on Mount Tabor that we are witnesses to unveils for a shining moment Christ's divinity, which had, up to this point in his earthly life, been so carefully and humbly hidden.

In Jesus Christ, heaven and earth meet; time and eternity mingle. The Gospel writers point out that the brilliance of Christ's features, and even the appearance of his clothes, surpassed the brightest imaginable experience of earthly light.

And in his transfiguration, we see in Jesus Christ the Old Covenant and the New Covenant meet and blend together. In this brief transforming and glorifying moment, Jesus converses with his Father's closest Old Testament collaborators, Moses and Elijah. Jesus speaks with Moses, whose Law he fulfills and with Elijah whose prophecies come to completion in his life, death, resurrection and glorification.

For an added touch of drama, the entire scene encompassing the transfiguration culminates in the splendor of the unity of the Trinity where the Holy Spirit overshadows Jesus in the form of a cloud – a cloud from which arises the voice of God the Father.

Since God the Father speaks directly to us so infrequently in Scripture, when he does raise his voice from heaven, we ought to listen to him. No doubt he chooses his words carefully: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

The voice of the Father speaking to us is one of a loving parent not of a dictatorial deity. He assures us: My Son is much more than just another teacher of the Law. In him you find the "fullness of grace and truth" – in him you find my glory and the face of everlasting love and mercy.

Since time began, men and woman from every walk of life have sought answers to the pressing questions that simmer deep within the human heart: "Why am I here? What is the ultimate meaning of existence? How can I find the happiness I so desperately long for? Why is there so much evil and suffering in the world? Why do I or my loved ones suffer?"

Throughout the centuries, as it is evident by the great literature of human history, men and women have addressed and tried to answer these questions. Their answers, always seem to come up somewhat incomplete. Our Father God, however, is the one who has truly responded with the only answer that makes sense. And his response is a surprising one: his answer to the tough questions of life is a living person, and not merely the words of a philosophy, doctrine or science.

The answer to the many questions of life is the person of the Father's "beloved Son," Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Christ's life, teachings, death and resurrection, God has answered all of our questions more thoroughly than all human words combined could have done and in a way we could have never imagined. Christ himself is the answer. The redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history. For every Christian and indeed for every human person, Jesus gives meaning to life. He gives unity to all the things in which we are engaged as we navigate our various worlds. Our Lord maps the perfect direction for our lives and he does so because he is the way, the truth and the life.

We all know that the Christian life of discipleship is all about choices. We are called to listen and discern and then choose the correct answer to our soul's questions about our existence.

Making the right choice for Christ is, however, easier at certain times in our faith journeys than at others. At particular times along our path of Christian discipleship, God leads us up a high mountain and grants us exceptional clarity, joy, and consolation. He does so because he knows that we need foretastes of the happiness he has in store for us. In times like these it's easy to say "yes" to the answer of Christ. And in "mountain top" experiences sometimes, we like spoiled children, want to hold onto these consoling times as if they were God himself. We echo Peter's petition: "Lord it's good that we're here. If you wish, let's just put up some tents and never leave!"

But earth is not heaven, and God loves us too much to let us settle for anything less than the fullness of his loving eternal friendship. And so, as Jesus leads us down from our high mountains he walks with us to our "Calvarys", where he teaches us to love his entire being and not just his consoling gifts.

To follow the Father's command to "listen to" his Son, to align our wills with that of his own, to say "yes" to the answer that is Christ, means we must first get to know the Son of the Father and, with that, understand his heart and heed his call for our lives. Jesus has been sent by the Father to be our guide to fulfillment, to be the meaning and happiness in life we all long for. Christ alone is the

answer, the secret to a life lived to the full. All we need to do is listen to him and turn our gaze to him. But how?

We listen and say “yes” to Christ by spending time in heartfelt prayer. When Peter, James and John went off to be alone with Jesus and pray on the mountain, they saw his glory and came to know him at a deeper level. In our own prayerful transfiguring moments, Jesus teaches us how to come closer to him and experience the movements of the Spirit so that in the silence of our hearts we can perceive the voice of the Father. The person of Jesus Christ has something very important to say to each of us. He longs that, through prayer, we can touch and be in communion with his inmost being. In addition to prayer, we listen and say “yes” to Christ as we turn our gaze to him in a variety of other ways:

- We listen by diving deeply into the rich teachings of the Church.
- We gaze upon Christ by immersing ourselves in the priceless living waters of holy Scripture.
- We listen to the Son of the Father by doing his will *each day* with faith, hope and love no matter if we’re flying high on the mountain of consolation or trudging low in a valley of desolation.
- And certainly, we attend to Christ’s voice and say “yes” by experiencing him truly present in all of the Sacraments.
 - For all of us who are fully initiated into the Sacramental life of the Church, let’s choose to experience more fully the life-giving waters of Christ through his healing Sacraments of reconciliation and that of the Eucharist. And in these sacred encounters with the Divine, let’s dare to ask the tough questions, then be present to the answer.
 - 9:00 AM only: For our teens present here amongst us at this Mass this morning who are preparing today for their reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, I, along with your sponsors, family members and the rest of the assembly, challenge you today as you are on retreat with Christ to ask the difficult, potentially life-changing questions:
 - Where am I going with my life? What role can God play in where ever it is that I am headed?

- And then, with these and other questions in mind, seek in the stillness of your hearts the *only* answer...seek to embrace the divine answer who comes to you in the form of a human package.
- 11:00 AM only: For our candidates present here amongst us at this Mass this morning who are preparing for full reception into the Church at Eastertime, I, along with your sponsors, family members and the rest of the assembly, challenge you today as you continue on your initiation journey to ask the difficult, potentially life-changing questions:
 - Who is Jesus to me? Merely a historic figure, or is he the foundation of my life?
 - And then with these and other questions in mind, seek in the stillness of your hearts the *only* answer...seek to embrace the divine answer who comes to you in the form of a human package.

By commanding the three apostles that day on Mt. Tabor to “listen to him,” the Father seems to imply that, even though Christ is his beloved Son, not everyone will accept him as Lord, Savior and the source of life. We hear a kind of plea in the Father’s command, a plea that must challenge all of us. Christ indeed is the answer, but is he my answer? Do I listen to him? Do I follow him? He is certainly the center of the universe, but is he the center of my life? Is it Jesus, the Father’s beloved Son alone, that I see and acknowledge as the source, the summit and the answer to life?