

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
March 16, 2025**

SCRIPTURES:

Genesis 15:5-12,17-18	Abraham trusted God totally.
Philippians 3:17-4:1	Christ will transform our earthly being.
Luke 9:28-36	The community is given notice of the resurrection.
Psalms 27:1,7-9,13-14	The Lord who is light brings light in our lives.

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

Luke:

Jesus has just been teaching about the cross in his life and in that of the disciples (Luke 9:18-27). The Church needs to hear from God to confirm this different word. The scene of the Transfiguration both verifies and gives meaning to Jesus' crucifixion and to ours. All will end in glory. Immediately after this episode, Jesus will speak of the Passion he is to undergo in Jerusalem. Luke wants to be sure that the cross is interpreted in light of the resurrection and that the resurrection is interpreted in the light of the cross. So it is with Jesus; so it will be in the lives of the disciples. The Transfiguration is not supposed to be seen in isolation. It provides a momentary glimpse of the resurrection. But there is no resurrection without a crucifixion.

Prayer: In Luke, Jesus' ministry begins with prayer and ends with prayer. He went into the desert to pray at the beginning; He returns his soul into the hands of his Father in his prayer on the cross. In between, he always turns to prayer. All significant events in the life of Jesus find him in prayer still. *Light, dazzling white:* a sign of divine transcendence. *Moses & Elijah:* both rejected as spokespersons for God. Jesus is associated with them as a sign of his own imminent rejection. *Exodus:* Jesus' own passing from this world is connected with the Exodus of God's people to the Land of Promise. *Glory:* always a connection with the life of heaven. *Three booths:* Peter misunderstands the conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah. He thinks this is the end of the world. The Feast of Booths had come to be seen as a prelude to the end, now that the harvest was gathered. These are the *end times:* the time for the fulfillment of God's intentions. The harvest had better be gathered in now! *Cloud:* sign of God's presence. Mary was *overshadowed* by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit so that God might become present to us in Jesus Christ, the Son. Now, the cloud of God's presence and power comes to demonstrate that God is fulfilling the promises made at Jesus' baptism. *My Son:* echo of God's words at the baptism of Jesus. God repeats here what he said concerning Jesus at the very beginning. *Hear him:* Listen to him now, as you previously listened to Moses. He will teach a new way: *to God through the cross.* It is not the law that leads us to God; it is the cross of Jesus Christ.

There is a *shadow* that hangs over every one of us. The great psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung claimed that the *shadow* is an essential, if somewhat fearsome, aspect or element of the human person. The *cloud* that hovers over the Tent of the Covenant in the Desert of Sinai is the same *cloud* that comes over Jesus and the disciples on Mount Tabor. In it, resides the cleansing and purifying power of God.

Lent is a season of *shadows*. It is not yet spring. The sun is getting brighter, but summer is not yet! In the darkness of our lives, we must still struggle toward the Light of Easter morning. In the midst of our sinfulness, we look up to Christ, the Lord of Glory.

However, make no mistake about it: God is present with love and with power in the darkness within which we live and struggle. God is not far away even as we wallow in sinfulness. The saving power of Jesus Christ has come into our world of sin to redeem us, to raise us up into the light, to bring forgiveness and salvation to all who allow Jesus to come to them. Can we trust that even the darkness of our lives carries within it the light of Christ?

Genesis:

The first part of Genesis tells of the origins of all nations; the second part, beginning at Verse 27 in Chapter 11, tells of the origins of Israel, God's special nation. The call of Abraham marks the beginning of nationhood for the Hebrews. Now, they are distinct from others; they have their own God and their own land. Abraham and Sarah, up to now childless, will be given a dynasty and a posterity. They and their descendants will have a land of their own, the most elementary requirement for any nation to be a nation. Abraham trusted God at God's word. He believed -- the first of a nation of those who would believe. He is our ancestor in faith

Philippians:

Paul does not have a very high opinion of the human body. It is the place of sin in human experience. Jews did not share the Greek appreciation for athletics and for nudity. Yet, Paul holds and teaches that it is in his human body that Jesus was raised as the Christ of glory. The body needs to be transformed into glory by the power of the risen Christ who will make our bodies like his own, resplendent in light. The resurrection of Christ will be the source and power for the transformation of all earthly flesh into glorious splendor. The faith of the Church introduces all believers into the glory of the risen Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the interplay between cross and glory in the life of the Church and of its members. How does the one give meaning to the other? How have crosses and sufferings, setbacks, and wrong turns, come to be a source of blessing, an opportunity for a new beginning in your life? Tell the story of your life from the point of view of hardships that have turned into places where you encountered God.

2. The Church is on a journey of conversion. How does the Transfiguration give definition to the nature of that journey? What does your parish or your family have to do this year during Lent to be ready to enter into the cloud with Jesus in order to experience the light and the resurrection of new life and new hope? Make some practical suggestions about some practices of penance that will allow the glory of God to envelop you and your group.

3. Do you see any evidence of the cross and of the resurrection in your own life and in the life of the family, group, community to which you belong? In the middle of trials and sufferings, what hope is there in your heart? Are you still struggling without hope? Where is the Risen Lord for you at this time? Have you laid a claim to the hope that comes from the Transfiguration? In what ways have you done so?

PRAYER

**God, our Father,
help us to hear your Son.
Enlighten us with your word
that we may find the way to your glory.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. Amen.**

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The Second Sunday of Lent provides parishes with the occasion to celebrate a penitential rite for those candidates, already baptized either in the Catholic Church or in some other Christian Church, who are preparing for full initiation by confirmation and Eucharist at Easter. This rite is parallel to the Rite of Scrutinies which is celebrated only with the elect (those who have been baptized). The penitential rite calls the candidates to a special purification during Lent. Their faith is truly maturing now as the time draws near for the completion of the Easter mysteries in their lives. Some of them are preparing for the sacrament of reconciliation at some point during this season of penance and rebirth.

The whole assembly will experience its own renewal and recommitment at this time. (See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, #459-463) The rites of initiation are celebrated in the midst of the worshipping assembly so that we, too, will be renewed. We will be taught the Church's authentic meaning of what Lent is all about. We will be invited to make ourselves available to the Spirit so that we can be renewed. The blessings that the candidates receive are imparted to all of us, too.

The Church is trying to recover its authentic heritage with respect to Lent. After centuries of rigorous practices of personal self-denial and individual, often secret, practices of mortification, we seem to have no other way of observing Lent. Many people have abandoned those practices and penances just mentioned without having any meaningful experiences to take their place. We are left with a vague sense of guilt for "not doing anything for Lent." (From the Liturgy of the Hours: Evening Prayer for the 2nd Sunday of Lent).

The Church uses two words as hallmarks for Lent: baptism and conversion. We need to prepare for an authentic experience of baptismal renewal at Easter time. The process that leads to that renewal is called ongoing conversion. We need to turn, again and again and ever more deeply, to the Lord Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection: to be thoroughly immersed in the mysteries of our salvation, to die again with Christ, to sin and to rise again to the new life of grace and holiness of heart.

As a community, we seek to recommit ourselves to our corporate mission: to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, to pray and to consecrate our work and the world around us through prayer, to lead others to an experience of salvation in evangelization.