

MARCH 5 – SECOND WEEK OF LENT

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Today's gospel story appears to be a direct response to the story of the temptation of Jesus in last Sunday's Gospel. Two of those temptations began with the words, "If you are the Son of God..." In today's Gospel God the Father himself affirms, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

The Transfiguration occupies a place in the season of Lent similar to its position in the gospels themselves. It occurs before our Lord's passion, during which his appearance will be far from divine, as he is beaten, bloody and weak. We will hear in the First Reading on Good Friday: "[T]here was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him, nor appearance that would attract us to him." (Isaiah 53:2bc) On Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, we will hear in the Second Reading: "Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:7a, 8) The Transfiguration is intended to sustain us in the face of Christ's passion, just as it was granted to the disciples who would witness his passion, so that we do not give in to despair but see the passion as the prelude to the revelation of Christ's glory. We already know the end of the story, the good news of the resurrection. This Transfiguration Sunday reminds us to keep that vision before us as we continue our Lenten pilgrimage toward Easter.

This Lenten pilgrimage is a symbol of our entire life's journey toward the "promised land" of heaven. It is not an easy journey; there are many pitfalls and stumbling blocks along the way. As people of faith, however, we live each day with confidence in God, who gives us hope. Abra[ha]m in today's First Reading leaves everything to follow God's call to a new homeland, where he will become the father of a great nation. As the type of the man of faith, we now honor Abraham as "our father in faith." (Eucharistic Prayer I) Saint Paul in today's Second Reading exhorts Timothy to rely on the strength that comes from God with a view toward the life and immortality that is the fruit of Jesus' death and resurrection. Finally the Responsorial Psalm expresses our trust in God who is "our help and our shield." If we know the Lord, we can say with the psalmist: "Of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full."

This Lent it is time again for us to "turn away from sin and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15) The sacrament of penance is the most powerful means of persevering in this resolve, because its grace is the result of Christ's obedient sacrifice for the redemption of the world. The Lenten discipline of prayer and penance finds its completion in a good confession and act of contrition. The prayer of absolution frees us from the sinful entanglements into which we fall. Remember also to participate in Operation Rice Bowl or in some other charitable cause this Lent.

Remember that the Fridays of Lent, the day of our Lord's passion and death, are days of penance, characterized by abstinence from eating meat at least by those who are 14 and older. I encourage families to come to the Stations of the Cross at 5:30 on Friday evenings at St. Charles. "The Way of the Cross" or "The Stations of the Cross" is a centuries-old devotion that gives to us who cannot make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land the opportunity to walk with Christ along the *Via Dolorosa* ("Sorrowful Street"). Guided by passages from the scriptures and prayers from the liturgy, we are able to meditate upon our Lord's suffering for the sake of our redemption. Nowadays there are few families who come. This is really sad, since families miss out on this opportunity to pray together, and children lose this opportunity to learn the story of our Lord's passion and its meaning for us. So, make it a point to come to the Stations on the Fridays which remain this Lent.

May this Lenten season be one of grace and blessing for all of us, especially those who may have become estranged from the Church and desire reconciliation. Pray the Rosary this week for those preparing to enter the Church at Easter and, as always, pray for peace.

May God bless his people with peace.

Monsignor Gorman