

March 16, 2025—Second Sunday of Lent

Deep in our hearts, we long to see the Face of God—what we call the Beatific Vision of heaven. When we come to understand or know something we often describe it as “seeing” the thing. As a boy, I remember that when a cartoon character got an idea, they would picture it with a light bulb over his head turned on. The light of an idea came to him.

In heaven, the light of God will illumine our souls so that we will know the pure joy of His love and goodness and wisdom forever. St. Theresa of Avila was a great mystic and often had visions and ecstasies that would even lift her off the ground. Jesus gave a vision of Himself to her, but not all at once. First, He showed His pierced hand and that sent her into an ecstasy, then little by little He revealed His whole self to her. It was as if she couldn’t take the whole vision of Jesus all at once.

This Sunday we heard the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus. He took Peter, James and John up to a mountain to pray and revealed the glory of His divinity to them. It could only be described in terms of light: **“His face changed in appearance and His clothing became dazzlingly white.”** St. Matthew described it by saying Jesus’ **“face shown like the sun”** (Matt 17:2). The apostles were overwhelmed by this vision of the divinity of Jesus.

St. Peter could never forget this event and wrote many years later: **“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son. With whom I am well pleased,’ we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain”** (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Also, Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets, appeared with Jesus. They were conversing with Him about His upcoming Exodus. Moses led the people on an Exodus out of physical slavery in Egypt through the desert to freedom in the Promised Land. The Exodus of Jesus leads humanity from the slavery of sin to freedom as children of God by way of the Cross. His is an Exodus that far surpasses the one of the Old Testament.

Both Moses and Elijah were given the privilege of seeing Almighty God in their lifetime. Although heaven was still not open to these great men, they were able to

talk with God the Son, Jesus, and see Him in His glory on this day of the Transfiguration. It is God's plan for us to be able to see Him face to face one day in the glory of heaven.

This time on earth, and especially during Lent, we are given the opportunity to clear out the things that keep us from seeing God. We have addictions or patterns of sin, weaknesses and vices that blind us. Jesus has done the hard work of our salvation, but He wants us to participate in it. We are to use our free will to choose Him and reject sin. St. Ambrose said there are two conversions in the Church: **“there are water and tears: the water of baptism and the tears of repentance.”** Our conversion took place through the waters of Baptism, but sanctification is not just a one-time event, it must continue throughout our lives.

To help us in this, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Penance, on Easter Sunday evening, also called the Sacrament of Conversion. We read the Gospel passage concerning its institution on the Sunday after Easter each year, fittingly called Divine Mercy Sunday. There are many reasons to go to frequent Confession, even if we don't have mortal sins on our soul.

If you go to a psychiatrist or counsellor for mental health problems and they find out you are a Catholic, more often than not, they will assume you are filled with Catholic guilt. They pre-judge your Catholic faith as the source of all your problems. We, Catholics don't have any more guilt than any other person, but we examine our consciences regularly and are more aware of our sins. Anyone can ignore or pretend that they have no sin, but their conscience is still weighed down by it. Confession lifts off the burden that feels like a heavy weight; it brings reconciliation with God and peace of soul. We, Catholics should be the freest from the effects of guilt because we have the great sacrament of confession available to us.

Sin weakens our will to do good and causes us to lose virtue. Pope Francis wrote: **“Having faith does not mean having no difficulties, but having the strength to face them, knowing that we are not alone.”** We are always going to have a battle with sin because the devil does not give up trying to tempt us. A good confession strengthens our will and prepares us for spiritual combat.

Abraham in the First Reading was called to greatness, to be the father of many nations, with his descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore. He responded with faith and we call him “our Father in faith”. We too are called to greatness as children of God and heirs of heaven.

Lukewarmness can make us tepid in faith and prone to sloth. Another effect of a good confession is overcoming mediocrity in our faith. It can give us a boost to keep trying to be faithful and not loose heart. Confession has many other good effects, as if, reconciliation with God and the Church are not enough. We shouldn't take the mercy of God for granted, but seek it continuously, in the great gift of the Sacrament of Penance.