

**Homily for the Second Sunday of Lent – Year C
March 13, 2022**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Every year on the Second Sunday of Lent we hear the Gospel account of the Transfiguration, when Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain, where His glory is revealed to them. The custom of reading today's Gospel near the beginning of Lent is said to have come from an ancient tradition which held that the Transfiguration of Jesus took place forty days before Good Friday.

Most commentators and scholars focus the meaning of the Transfiguration on the meeting between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Moses symbolizes the law, and Elijah symbolizes the prophets. Located in the middle of these two, Jesus symbolizes how he fulfills the law and the prophets—or how he even supersedes them. This is then confirmed by a voice emerging from the cloud, indicating the identity of Jesus as God's Beloved Son.

Many holy and learned people have commented on the meaning of the Transfiguration. St. Leo the Great said, "The principal aim of the Transfiguration was to banish from the disciples' souls the scandal of the Cross."¹

St. Bede, commenting on today's passage of the Gospel, says that "Our Lord, in a loving concession allowed Peter, James and John to enjoy for a very short time the contemplation of the happiness that lasts forever, so as to enable them to bear adversity with greater fortitude."²

Father Francis Fernandez, in his book of meditations called *In Conversation with God*, says that "Man's existence is a journey towards Heaven, our dwelling place. It is a journey which is, at times, harsh and laborious because we often have to go against the current of opinion and we will have to struggle against many enemies both inside and outside of ourselves. But God wants to strengthen us with the hope of Heaven, in a special way at the more difficult moments or when the weakness of our condition makes itself more felt."³

St John Chrysostom wrote, "At the time of temptation think of the Love that awaits you in heaven: foster the virtue of hope . . . There, all is repose, joy and delight; all serenity and calm, all peace, splendor and light.

It is not a light such as we enjoy now, and which, compared with that light, is no more than a lamp placed beside the sun ... For there, there is no night, or twilight, heat or cold, or any change in one's way of being, but a state such as can be understood only by those who are worthy to possess it. There, there is no old age, or sickness, or anything allied to corruption, because it is the place and the home of immortal glory. And above all this, the everlasting presence and possession of Christ, of the angels ... everyone perpetually of like mind, without any fear of Satan or the snares of the devil or the threats of hell or of death.”⁴

One very important detail we should note about the Transfiguration is that it occurs when Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain to pray. If we hope to see Christ in His glory, we must devote time and attention to prayer.

In his booklet, *How to converse continually and familiarly with God*, St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote this about prayer: “When God grants you the grace of feeling his presence, and desires that you should speak to Him as your most beloved friend, tell Him about your feelings with all freedom and confidence. . . . Without waiting for you to come close to Him, He hastens towards you; when you seek His love, and He presents himself to you,

granting you the graces and remedies that you need. He only waits for one word from you in order to show you that he is beside you and wants to listen to you and console you. . . . Other friends, those who are friends in the world, have times that they spend talking together and other times when they are separated, but between God and yourselves, if you want, there need never be any time of separation.”

Another detail of the Transfiguration that we must note is what God the Father says about Jesus in the voice that comes from Heaven: “This is my chosen Son; listen to him” (Luke 9:35).

Pope Francis, in one of his homilies on the Transfiguration, said the “instructions for the disciples and for us are this: ‘Listen to Him!’ Listen to Jesus. He is the Savior: follow Him. To listen to Christ, in fact, entails taking up the logic of His Paschal Mystery, setting out on the journey with Him to make of oneself a gift of love to others.” Pope Francis then suggested we look at the Transfiguration in the following way: “With Peter, James, and John we too climb the Mount of the Transfiguration today and stop in contemplation of the face of Jesus to retrieve the message and translate it into our lives; for we too can be transfigured by love.”

Like the disciples, it would be good for us to spend time alone with Jesus and simply to allow ourselves to be transformed in the light of his unconditional love. In our busy and noisy world, this can be a challenge. So perhaps we need to go “up the mountain” every now and again, especially during this season of Lent, to find the quiet that will allow us to meet Christ and to be changed inwardly by his immense love for us. Our moments of being present with Jesus can offer us an inner silence that brings us strength, and from which flows a tenderness for ourselves and for others.

All of this is summed up very beautifully and succinctly in the Preface for the Second Sunday of Lent, which says, “For after He had told the disciples of His coming Death, on the holy mountain He manifested to them His glory, to show, even by the testimony of the law and the prophets, that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection.”

God is with us always. On the altar, God transforms simple bread and ordinary wine into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Transformed by divine grace, we continue serving God’s holy people and His Church, as we pray that we may one see Him face to face, in all the glory of His Heavenly Kingdom.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ St Leo the Great, Sermon 51 , 3.

² St Bede, Commentary on St Mark, 8; 30: 1,3.

³ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 2 (London, New York: Scepter, 1989), p. 99.

⁴ St John Chrysostom, *Epistle 1 to Theodore*, 11.