

My Brothers and Sisters,

Just as the Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent is always the story of Jesus' forty-day fast in the desert and his temptations by the devil, the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent is always the story of Jesus' transfiguration.

We believe that God reveals himself both in words and deeds. Just prior to the transfiguration, Jesus had prophesied his death and resurrection. In the transfiguration Jesus gave his disciples a glimpse of his resurrection.

The transfiguration, then, helped prepare and strengthen the disciples for Jesus' impending passion and death. As we will hear in today's Preface, "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."

Second, Jesus often spoke about the Law and the Prophets. Therefore, the presence of Moses and Elijah was significant. Moses represented the Old Testament Law while Elijah represented the Old Testament Prophets. Their presence with Jesus suggests that Jesus himself and his passion, death and resurrection were the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and Prophets. In fact, only Luke's Gospel tells us that they were discussing "*his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem,*" emphasizing even more strongly that his death and resurrection were the fulfillment of God's plan and promises.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, this was one of only three times when we hear the voice of God the Father in the New Testament. Just as he had done at Jesus' baptism, the Father validated Jesus: "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." As I mentioned on the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, "the Jews of Jesus' time believed that when the Messiah came, he would be recognized and accepted by the Jewish religious leaders. Obviously, Jesus was not. However, ultimately it would not matter because Jesus was validated by God himself both at his baptism and transfiguration."

Jesus' transfiguration also offers us insight into ourselves. In human terms, Jesus, Peter, James, and John had a peak experience on the mountain. However, they had to come down the mountain. Shortly thereafter, Jesus began his journey to Jerusalem and his crucifixion. Likewise, when we have peak experiences in our lives, we always have to come down the mountain and back to our everyday life. This is very difficult for some people. For example, some people are always seeking peak experiences of God and, therefore, are disappointed when they cannot feel the presence and love of God in their lives. When the honeymoon stage of their marriage ends, some young couples struggle with the everyday reality of marriage. Even Jesus had to come down the mountain.

My brothers and sisters, the story of the transfiguration also reminds us that Lent is meant to be a transformative time in our lives. In other words, when Lent is over, we should be changed people, a changed community. When we celebrate Easter, we want to be celebrating not just Jesus' resurrection two thousand years ago but our own resurrection to new life with him. Finally, the story of the transfiguration reminds us of our vocation, our call, to become the "best version of ourselves." Jesus' transfiguration reminds us that we are not all that we can be, all that we are called to be. We can be more than we are; we can be better than we are.