

2nd Sunday of Lent - B
Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18;
Romans 8:31b-34;
Mark 9:2-10
Little Flower - 2/25/24

My Brothers and Sisters,

Every year on the Second Sunday of Lent, the Church proclaims the Gospel of the Transfiguration of Jesus.

To understand the story, we have to understand it in its context. Six days earlier Jesus had prophesied his passion, death, and resurrection, and he would repeat the same prophecy at least twice more. Jesus' transfiguration, therefore, helped prepare the apostles for the reality of his passion and death by giving them a glimpse of his resurrected glory. Jesus' transfiguration, then, gave them hope.

His transfiguration also helped them understand more clearly who Jesus was and why he came. In the Old Testament, the most important books were the Law and the Prophets, and Jesus himself frequently referred to the Law and the Prophets. Moses represented the Law; Elijah represented the Prophets. Their appearance with Jesus makes clear to Peter, James, and John and to us that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and the Prophets and, therefore, the promised Messiah or Savior.

In the New Testament, we only hear the voice of God the Father three times. After the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus, we hear the voice of God the Father: *"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."* With those words, God the Father clearly revealed Jesus' core identity and authenticated his ministry and mission.

The transfiguration calls us to deeper faith, hope, and love. The words of God the Father and the appearance of Moses and Elijah emphatically tell us that Jesus is Son of God and Savior. Second, when we or our loved ones are struggling, suffering, or dying or even when we feel overwhelmed by the suffering and evil in our world, Jesus' transfiguration gives us hope and deepens our belief both in an afterlife and in the resurrection of the body. Third, since the Transfiguration was in response to Jesus' prophecy of his passion, death, and resurrection, it calls us to a deeper love for others. Jesus' passion and death revealed his self-revealing, self-giving, and self-sacrificing love for us. Since he called us to love one another as he loves us, he calls us to be self-revealing, self-giving, and self-sacrificing.

In the book of Genesis, God established a covenant with Abraham as he had with Noah. As part of his covenant with Abraham, God had promised to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands on the seashore. However, in today's reading from Genesis, God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. As he had done when he asked Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees, God was asking Abraham to entrust his life and his future to God and to God's word of promise. When Abraham was willing to do as God asked, God renewed his covenant with him. Lent challenges us to deepen our faith and our trust in God. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans, *"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?"*

My brothers and sisters, this Monday evening will be our Little Flower-Lourdes Lenten Penance Service here at 7:00 p.m. I really want to encourage you to attend and participate. Six priests are scheduled to hear confessions. Several of them speak Spanish. Our First Communicants will make their first confession at that time. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, it is true that our sins are forgiven even before we commit them. However, God does not force his forgiveness on us. We have to freely accept God's forgiveness. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we acknowledge our sinfulness and experience the forgiveness of God. However, the forgiveness of God is not just about the past, not just about wiping our slate clean. Rather, it empowers us going forward to become the-best-version-of-ourselves.