Homily for the Second Sunday in Lent 2026 Year A

Today's Gospel was the story of the Transfiguration.

What lesson can we draw from that story that could be useful for Lent?

The Transfiguration was a high point in Saint Peters life, because right there before him to his delight on top of the mountain, was absolute proof that Jesus was all that He claimed to be. There He was, conversing with two of the great figures of Jewish history, Moses and Elijah, both of whom had by tradition been assumed into heaven. This was clear proof to Peter that Jesus was at least the equal, if not much more superior to them. So delighted was he that he babbled some nonsense about building 3 tents for them.

So, it was all true. Jesus really was the Messiah, and Peter must have felt so happy to have made the right decision and left everything to follow Him. In the presence of the divine, Peters faith glowed and was strong.

Then, quite suddenly, a dark cloud hid the presence of the Divine, this sight of a transfigured Jesus, and what a change for Peter. Instead of a strong faith there was now doubt and fear. What if it had all been an illusion, wishful thinking or an overactive imagination?

In the sudden sense of the absence of the Divine, Peter's faith was so fragile that the pendulum swung from joyful faith to fearful doubt.

Now isn't that a common experience of life, that for all of us there are moments of strong faith when God feels very close and real to us, and then there are also those darker moments, when for diverse reasons, our faith for God falters and he seems far away or doesn't even seem to exist at all.

This Lent could perhaps be a time when we could learn a whole new discipline in our lives; to allow ourselves to experience and understand, and come to accept a truth that is very hard to bear, that God Himself is often closer to us, more present to us in that terrible sense or feeling of his absence, than He is when we bask in the consoling sense of His presence.

Lent is not just a symbolic re-enactment of the desert experience of Christ when He would fast and pray for 40 days. It can also become a very real Transfiguration experience for us when we are able to not only change

personal habits of life, but also, just as importantly, the way that we look at life, the way that we perceive spiritual things.

If for me Lent becomes a desert experience then it is not an easy thing to endure.

When you enter a desert, you enter a vast, unmarked wilderness bereft of all that is comfortable and familiar in our lives, especially perhaps the consoling presence of God.

That is a desert that many of us have experienced, and maybe not just once in our lives.

If we could but learn to open up our eyes to see it, here we have a whole new experience of God, a totally different type of experience of God. A very real presence of God in that lonely and painful feeling of the total absence of God.

Like St Peter on Mount Tabor, something suddenly happens in our lives and we can no longer see or feel the Divine. The cloud surrounds us, and the light goes out. But Peter, in that darkness, heard a voice reassuring him that Christ was still there and, more importantly, the voice advised him to "Listen to Him".

Maybe that is part of the lesson that we need to learn. When, in our darkness, we lose all sight and feel of the consoling concerning presence of the Divine, if we could only learn how to listen, we could perhaps come to a new experience of the Divine.

But listen to what? When we come to live in the desert or the absence of a sense of God, nothing is more painful than the utter silence of God.

In my darkness, in my desert, he is not there. I cannot sense Him, I cannot feel Him, I cannot hear Him.

But I would be wrong. This is where the notion of Transfiguration comes in once more. I have to learn the difficult task of changing how I look at and interpret things, and open myself up to a new experience of God.

If I make the effort and try to listen, and I am then disappointed by the oppressive silence, it is because of the way I understand and look at silence.

Most people understand silence to be an empty thing, a total absence of noise and sound. But if I can now turn this completely on its head and see silence not as emptiness, but as something full, waiting, or pregnant with all sorts of

possibilities. All sound, echoes, or reverberates in a sea of silence. Silence is not empty; it is the very thing that transmits sound to me.

Likewise, the silence of God is not empty of God, but rather a new set of conditions to bring a new experience of God to me. But only if I'm prepared to listen, to open myself up to that new experience of this same God who seems to have withdrawn himself from me.

When the cloud and darkness lifted Saint Peter would have learnt, with great relief, that Christ was still there. All that time Christ had been present with him, though he (St Peter) had felt him in a different way, as a loss or as an absence.

So maybe this Lent is a lesson that we too could learn in that God does not cease to exist just because we cannot sense or feel him. He is still there, even though all we are feeling is his absence. It can give us great hope and encouragement. It can stave off despair. If we can understand and accept that our feeling of the loss or absence of God is a different and difficult way of experiencing the presence of God.

Just as silence brings sound to me, so too the feeling of the absence of God makes Him present to me, but in a different way!