

Readings: Genesis 2: 3 - 9, Romans 5: 17 - 19, Matthew 4: 1 - 11



Fr Michael says:

The Transfiguration

This weekend is a very important one for me, as it coincides exactly with the date of my Ordination and First High Mass in March 1966: the Readings of today's Mass are the same. I was in my own Parish, with my family, friends and my School Choir in attendance. I celebrated the High Mass on the Sunday in the Chapel of the Sisters who looked after me when I was at primary School! Each of us is called in similar but widely different ways and like Abraham's call, from Genesis – ALL of us are blessed and his approach to the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, parallels very much and foretells Jesus' own journey to fulfil His Mission, and ours to continue it today. The Letter to Timothy emphasises how the power of God, linked to a vision of immortality helps us to live with the sufferings which come from this obedience to our calling in Faith.

The Gospel scene is again one of these revelatory ones of who Jesus is; the Incarnation and the Gift of the Eucharist are other examples, as depicted in the Basilica, where the event is supposed to have happened. We hear a voice and message of favour as happened at Jesus' Baptism. The cloud signifies the presence of God and with the appearance of Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets: ALL is here! Jesus is affirmed in His Mission and the Disciples are helped by the glory of the Lord, which is fully attained after the Resurrection. The experience is important, it is long lasting, for all present, as it marks the start of the journey to Jerusalem and the fulfilment of the Mission! It does not change what will happen, but it affects deeply how it is experienced.

This scene is a "peak of experience", with its strong feeling of grace of presence; it can be triggered by several means: poetry, music or nature, but it is most usually felt through pain and suffering, mingled with glimpses of what is to come. We do not search out these experiences, as we must not neglect the importance of the rest of our daily lives – low moments can be a means too of triggering such an experience. "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer and so enter into His Glory?"

Faith empowers us to return to our ordinary lives. As Emily Dickinson wrote: "Exhilaration is the breeze that lifts us from the ground and leaves us in another place, whose statement is not found. Returns us not, but after time, we soberly descend, a little newer for the term upon enchanted ground." We must never be like Peter, the man of action at all times, we need times of stillness, quiet, contemplation and wonder, and adoration in the presence of God. In the words of the Psalmist: "Be still and know that I am God!" Sometimes we are too busy, we would be better to be silent, to stand back and reflect on what is happening: to be wondering and adoring in the presence of God! Where are we in this?



Fr Jean-Marie says:

Theme: The transfiguration of Jesus.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, today the Second Sunday of Lent, we read the gospel of the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain. Jesus saw difficulties coming ahead and he had an important decision to make. He saw ahead of him a growing opposition from the religious leaders of people: they would kill him if he proceeded with his mission. Yet Jesus would carry out that task, and so he went up the mountain to pray that the Father would give him courage. Today Jesus shows us the way. He saw suffering and death waiting for him and so his face and heart were sad. But then the Father made Jesus' face radiant for he would find life and resurrection and his face became radiant with joy and glory. In the vision of the transfiguration he saw how he would rise from the dead and succeed. The brief glimpse of his future glory strengthened Jesus on his road through suffering and death to resurrection. At the same time the experience of the transfiguration strengthened the faith and hope of his disciples and of us on the road of our own transformation in Christ. The disciples were encouraged for what was to come by what they saw. Their desire to stay with Jesus increased. We are called to believe like them, to have faith and confidence in Jesus as they had and to increase our desire to be with him. This time of penance and transformation is about making ourselves ready for that great day when our true glory will be revealed as was Christ's glory on the mountain top – a glory which is ours if we strengthen our faith and remove sin from our lives. Lent is for us the privileged season of change, of transformation, transfiguration. Our complacent and guilty faces have to be changed into faces of joy and love and service. The face of our world is to be changed from injustice into integrity, from hatred into kindness and friendship.

Sometimes we are afraid of change, especially at the cost of ourselves. In the second reading, God calls us today to spread the gospel of Jesus and be ready to suffer for it. If we suffer with Jesus, we shall live with him. If we follow Jesus and let him transform us our face will become radiant too.

In today's first reading, God demands radical change from Abraham. He is called, when still a pagan. Abraham accepted God's calling and changed his life and became a believer. Abraham was transfigured: his pagan face was now shining in the light of faith.

During this time of Lent, like Abraham we are called to change our pagan faces into faces of faith. May God give us this grace today? Amen.