

Weekend Readings & Reflections

March 12-13, 2022 – Second Sunday of Lent

Reflection: *In today's Gospel, we go up to the mountain with Peter, John, and James. There we see Jesus "transfigured," speaking with Moses and Elijah about His "exodus." The Greek word "exodus" means "departure." But the word is chosen deliberately here to stir our remembrance of the Israelites' flight from Egypt. By His death and resurrection, Jesus will lead a new Exodus—liberating not only Israel but every race and people; not from bondage to Pharaoh, but from slavery to sin and death. He will lead all mankind, not to the territory promised to Abraham in today's First Reading, but to the heavenly commonwealth that Paul describes in today's Epistle. Moses, the giver of God's law, and the great prophet Elijah, were the only Old Testament figures to hear the voice and see the glory of God atop a mountain (see Exodus 24:15–18; 1 Kings 19:8–18). Today's scene closely resembles God's revelation to Moses, who also brought along three companions and whose face also shone brilliantly (see Exodus 24:1; 34:29). But when the divine cloud departs in today's Gospel, Moses and Elijah are gone. Only Jesus remains. He has revealed the glory of the Trinity—the voice of the Father, the glorified Son, and the Spirit in the shining cloud. Jesus fulfills all that Moses and the prophets had come to teach and show us about God (see Luke 24:27). He is the "chosen One" promised by Isaiah (see Isaiah 42:1; Luke 23:35), the "prophet like me" that Moses had promised (see Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22–23; 7:37). Far and above that, He is the Son of God (see Psalm 2:7; Luke 3:21–23). "Listen to Him," the Voice tells us from the cloud. If, like Abraham, we put our faith in His words, one day we too will be delivered into "the land of the living" that we sing of in today's Psalm. We will share in His resurrection, as Paul promises, our lowly bodies glorified like His.*

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome our discussion on the First Second of Lent. Let's begin by praying this prayer from Psalm 63:

All: "O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is. So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary, beholding thy power and glory. Because thy steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise thee." --Psalm 63:1-3 (RSV)

Father, you revealed your chosen Son to his disciples, giving them a glimpse of that glory which he had with you from the beginning, a foretaste of the glory he was to bring about by the exodus he would accomplish in Jerusalem. As we reflect on your Word, open our hearts to an ardent longing for that same glory promised to us who seek your face day after day. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Leader: The Gospel reading this week describes the event where Jesus is transfigured before his disciples and a voice is heard saying, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." If you remember back to Jesus' baptism, the Father said something similar. What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of the Father? Reflect on this as we watch today's video.

(Play the video on [FORMED.org](https://www.formed.org) - [Opening the Word – First Sunday in Lent \(Year C\)](#))

Digging Deeper: God's Thirst for us.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives a beautiful description of prayer as a thirst—God's thirst for us meeting our thirst for him:

"If you knew the gift of God! The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we thirst for him." (CCC 2560)

FIRST READING ~ Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18 ~

The Lord God took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,” he added, “shall your descendants be.” Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. He then said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession.” “O Lord GOD,” he asked, “how am I to know that I shall possess it?” He answered him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Abram brought him all these, split them in two, and placed each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut up. Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram stayed with them. As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces. It was on that occasion that the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates.”

Abram has 3 conversations with God about a promise made to him. This is the second and Abram is upset. He has left his home, is in a foreign land, and the promise to be the Father of a large nation is almost laughable as he and his wife are now so old. They do not have a child. Abram asks for a sign. God makes a covenant. In the Old Testament a covenant was a solemn promise between two parties. Both parties would walk through the middle of the split animals as a symbol of what would happen if either party broke the promise. God is the only one to walk through the animals (v17) symbolized by the fire.

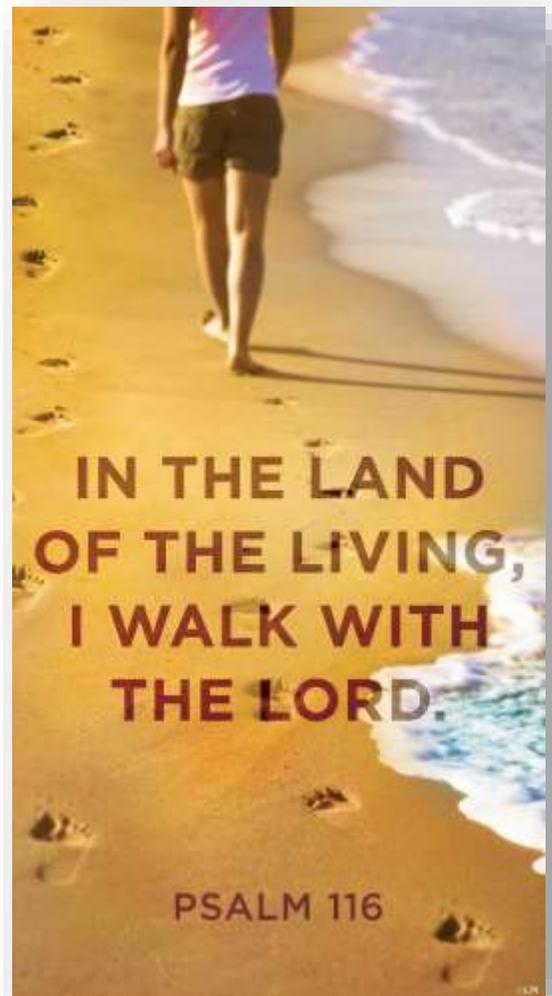
- What do you think this means? Can you identify with Abram in your life? What does God's covenant faithfulness mean for you today?

SECOND READING ~ Philippians 3:17-4:1 ~

Brothers and sisters: Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved.

St Paul loved the Philippian community. They were his first community. They were being pressured politically. To be acceptable they needed to partake in civic ceremonies and the worship of the Emperor cult. They were worried about their image of acceptability. St Paul reminds them their citizenship is in heaven.

- What pressures do you face to be acceptable in the eyes of the world?
- How can you live more fully for 'heaven' during this time of Lent?



GOSPEL ~ Luke 9:28b-36~

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

The transfiguration of Jesus appearing dazzlingly white symbolizes a heavenly reality. Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Fulfilling the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah). Jesus' divine nature shines through. While glorious, the ministry in Galilee is now over. Jesus will soon set his face like flint (Lk 9:51) towards the exodus, his suffering, death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Peter wants to stay in glory on the mountain.

- *Is there anything you have heard in prayer that requires costly obedience? Where would the journey down the mountain (from prayer) and confronting evil (to the cross) lead you?*

Making tents and sleeping in them was part of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. It reminded Jewish people of the special time when God pitched his tent among them in the desert. It was a symbol of wanting God to be with them again. Jesus is revealed as the very presence of God among his people in the transfigured bright whiteness like Moses had met on Mt Sinai. Peter doesn't get it. He seeks to build tents hoping for a future coming of God. Peter does not know what he is saying or doing.

- *Are you mucking around with tents or going down the mountain to work?*

The Divine Voice of the Father from heaven speaks only a few times in the Gospels. 9 words are shared today: 'This is my chosen Son, listen to him'.

- *During the season of Lent how could you listen more? What is the best way you have found in the past to 'listen' to God?*

MEDITATION

What can blind us or keep us from recognizing God's glory in our lives? Sin and unbelief for sure! Faith enables us to see what is hidden or unseen to the naked eye. Through the eyes of faith Abraham recognized God and God's call on his life. Abraham is the father of faith because he put his hope in the promises of God. Faith makes us taste in advance the light of God's glory when we shall see him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2).

The Lord Jesus reveals his glory in fulfilling his Father's will God is eager to share his glory with us! We get a glimpse of this when the disciples see Jesus transfigured on the mountain. Jesus' face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white (Mark 9:2,3).

When Moses met with God on Mount Sinai the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God (see Exodus 34:29). Paul says that the Israelites could not look

at Moses' face because of its brightness (2 Corinthians 3:7). In the Gospel account Jesus appeared in glory with Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and with Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, in the presence of three of his beloved apostles - Peter, James, and John. Jesus went to the mountain knowing full well what awaited him in Jerusalem - his betrayal, rejection and crucifixion. Jesus very likely discussed this momentous decision to go to the cross with Moses and Elijah. God the Father also spoke with Jesus and gave his approval: This is my beloved Son; listen to him. The Father glorified his son because he obeyed. The cloud which overshadowed Jesus and his apostles fulfilled the dream of the Jews that when the Messiah came the cloud of God's presence would fill the temple again (see Exodus 16:10, 19:9, 33:9; 1 Kings 8:10; 2 Maccabees 2:8).

The Lord Jesus not only wants us to see his glory - he wants to share this glory with us. And Jesus shows us the way to the Father's glory: follow me - obey my words - take the path I have chosen for you and you will receive the blessings of my Father's kingdom - your name will be written in heaven.

Jesus succeeded in his mission because he went to Calvary so that Paradise would be restored to us once again. He embraced the cross to obtain the crown of glory that awaits each one of us, if we will follow in his footsteps.

Luke's Gospel account tells us that while Jesus was transfigured, Peter, James, and John were asleep (Luke 9:32)! Upon awakening they discovered Jesus in glory along with Moses and Elijah. There are many things which can keep our minds asleep to the things of God: Mental lethargy and the "unexamined life" can keep us from thinking things through and facing our doubts and questions. The life of ease can also hinder us from considering the challenging or disturbing demands of Christ. Prejudice can make us blind to something new the Lord may have for us. Even sorrow can be a block until we can see past it to the glory of God.

Peter, James, and John were privileged witnesses of the glory of Christ. We, too, as disciples of Christ are called to be witnesses of his glory. We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Lord wants to reveal his glory to us, his beloved disciples.

- *Am I blinded from recognizing God's glory in my life? Am I prepared to see God's glory? Do I seek his presence with faith and reverence? How much do I miss of God's glory and action because I am asleep spiritually? Am I spiritually awake?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing, let us pray together:

ALL: Lord Jesus, keep me always alert to you, to your presence in my life, and to your life-giving word that nourishes me daily. Let me see your glory. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

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