

Sunday Message

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • 5 March 2023 • Psalter Week 2



SHOWING YOUR REAL FACE

MATTHEW 17:1-9

I lived in a Redemptorist community many years ago with an old confrere I will call Jack. Jack was a very holy man, but he always looked dour and never smiled. He had a long, sombre face, and he suffered from scruples. He was constantly worrying about his sins and anxious to go to confession.

Then one day, Jack had a visit from a childhood friend, who reminded Jack of a funny incident that had happened in their school days. Suddenly Jack's face lit up, and he began to shake with laughter, his eyes sparkling, his facial features more alive than I had ever seen them before. It was like looking at a different man, like I had seen his real face for the first time.

In today's Gospel, Jesus shows his real face. He takes his three closest friends up a hill, and something extraordinary happens. Jesus is transfigured. He changes. He is revealed in his heavenly glory as he really is - the beloved Son of the Father.

That's the literal meaning of "transfiguration" - to change one's face, to show one's true face. And that's what happens on the mountaintop. The disciples see Jesus' real face; his transfigured, glorified face, and they are awestruck. Peter gets so carried away that he wants to erect three tents, to freeze the moment forever.

The reason the transfiguration takes place at this time in Matthew's Gospel is to give the disciples a boost. Jesus knows there will be tough times ahead. He knows what will happen to him in Jerusalem and that life will get difficult for his followers. The transfiguration is a little glimpse of heaven. It shows them who Jesus really is, and gives them a foretaste of what awaits them if they remain faithful to their Master. ■

REFLECT

The transfiguration story offers (at least) three lessons.

First, it holds out a promise for people of faith. It is not easy to be a Christian today or to remain faithful when so many others have walked away. The transfiguration offers us a glimpse of our destiny, our heavenly glory, as followers of Christ.

Second, the Gospel challenges us to see people differently, to see their real face. It's so easy to judge or dismiss people.

We can let an unpleasant encounter with someone colour how we see them. Or we meet someone going through a difficult time and judge them based on what they are like now rather than who they really are. The challenge is to see their real face, their best side, to see their God-created beauty, no matter how difficult.

The Gospel also challenges us to see ourselves differently, to see our real face. Many people find it hard to see themselves the way God sees them. We can focus on the negative - our flaws, our

DO

On the mountaintop, the three disciples saw Jesus in his radiant glory. Try to see the God-given beauty in all you meet.

PRAY

Pray that you will always see the good in others.

SAY

"Lord, keep me faithful to you at all times. Never let me lose sight of you. Amen."

LEARN

Peter, James, and John were so transfixed by their mountaintop experience they wanted it to last forever. It couldn't, not this side of the grave. They had to come back down to earth once more. The lesson is to always live in the moment, to live every moment fully. Attune yourself to the manifest signs of God's presence all around. Live each moment in a way that points to your heavenly destiny.



failures - and think we don't measure up, and our self-esteem suffers. When we look in the mirror, we see only our faults.

But our faith tells us that God has created us in God's image, that God has counted every hair on our head, and God doesn't create failures. We must see ourselves as God made us, our real face.

What a different world we would have, and what different people we would be if we could see ourselves and others the way God sees us - our true face. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face.
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face from me.

COLLECT

O God, who have commanded us
to listen to your beloved Son,
be pleased, we pray,
to nourish us inwardly by your word,
that, with spiritual sight made pure,
we may rejoice to behold your glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Genesis 12:1-4

A reading from the book of Genesis.
The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country,
your family and your father's house, for the
land I will show you. I will make you a great
nation; I will bless you and make your name
so famous that it will be used as a blessing.
"I will bless those who bless you:
I will curse those who slight you.
All the tribes of the earth
shall bless themselves by you."
So Abram went as the Lord told him.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 32

Response:
**May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you.**

- 1. For the word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.
The Lord loves justice and right
and fills the earth with his love. (R.)
- 2. The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine. (R.)
- 3. Our soul is waiting for the Lord.
The Lord is our help and our shield.
May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you. (R.)

SECOND READING 2 Timothy 1:8-10

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to
Timothy.
With me, bear the hardships for the sake of
the Good News, relying on the power of God
who has saved us and called us to be holy –
not because of anything we ourselves have
done but for his own purpose and by his own
grace. This grace had already been granted
to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning
of time, but it has only been revealed by the
Appearing of our saviour Christ Jesus. He
abolished death, and he has proclaimed life
and immortality through the Good News.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!
From the bright cloud the Father's voice was
heard:
"This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him."
Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

GOSPEL Matthew 17:1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.
Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and
James and his brother John and led them up
a high mountain where they could be alone.
There in their presence he was transfigured:
his face shone like the sun and his clothes
became as white as the light. Suddenly
Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they
were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to
Jesus, "Lord," he said "it is wonderful for us
to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents
here, one for you, one for Moses and one for
Elijah." He was still speaking when suddenly
a bright cloud covered them with shadow,
and from the cloud there came a voice
which said, "This is my Son, the Beloved;
he enjoys my favour. Listen to him." When
they heard this, the disciples fell on their
faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came
up and touched them. "Stand up," he said
"do not be afraid." And when they raised
their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus.
As they came down from the mountain Jesus
gave them this order. "Tell no one about the
vision until the Son of Man has risen from the
dead."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**
(all bow during the next two lines)
**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.**
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.**
Amen

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this sacrifice, O Lord, we pray,
cleanse us of our faults
and sanctify your faithful in body and mind
for the celebration of the paschal festivities.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**This is my beloved Son,
with whom I am well pleased;
listen to him.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive these glorious mysteries,
we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord,
for allowing us while still on earth
to be partakers even now of the things of
heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Father in heaven, you have made us for
yourself; our hearts are restless until they rest
in you. Fulfil this longing through Jesus, the
bread of life, so that we may witness to him
who alone satisfies the hungers of the human
family. By the power of your Spirit lead us
to the heavenly table where we may feast
on the vision of your glory for ever and ever.
Amen.