

Second Sunday of Lent – Year C  
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Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
17 March 2019

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18  
Psalm 27  
Philippians 3:17-4:1  
(see Matthew 17:5) Luke 9:28b-36

*Transfiguration and Awakening to God*

As I preached last week, we begin Lent each year on the first two Sundays, by hearing about the Temptation of Jesus on the First Sunday, and then hearing about the Transfiguration of Jesus on the Second Sunday. And, recall again that we have a three-year cycle of Sunday Gospel Readings: Year A for Matthew; Year B for Mark; and Year C for Luke. So, even though the themes are the same for the first two Sundays each year – Temptation and Transfiguration – because we have three different evangelists, each year we receive a different angle on those same two themes.

This year – Year C – we're hearing from the perspective of Luke. So, in last week's homily, I focused on Luke's perspective of Jesus' experience of the Temptation. And the detail that we took notice of was that, even though Matthew and Luke each list the three different Temptations that Jesus experienced, each one lists them in a different order. Whereas Matthew orders them:

- 1) Turn stones into bread;
- 2) Throw Himself down from the parapet of the Temple;
- 3) Be given all the kingdoms of the world, if He worshiped Satan.<sup>1</sup>

Luke orders them:

- 1) Turn a stone into bread;
- 2) Be given all the kingdoms of the world, if He worshiped Satan;
- 3) Throw Himself down from the parapet of the Temple.<sup>2</sup>

So, in this year, hearing from Luke, the Church offers us an emphasis on the importance of *trusting in God* to help us during Lent. When we face temptation – that will surely come at us

during Lent – Jesus gave us these words to guide us: “You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, by refusing to jump from the parapet of the Temple, Jesus said to Satan, “I don’t need to jump from the parapet of the Temple to see if the Father will catch me. I already know that He’s got me. He’s with me always, guiding me, protecting me, and, if I do happen to fall, I know He will catch me.”<sup>4</sup>

This trust in the Father is the foundation, the starting point for our Lent. Trusting that the Father has a plan for our growth in holiness during this Lent. And when we’re tempted to make accommodations on our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we can recommit to our Lenten plan, trusting that the Father has given us this season as a gift. And trusting that following the plan of Lent – even if we don’t know exactly where it’s headed or why it’s good for us – will help us stay in the Father’s protection. Trusting that it will be the best course for our growth in holiness and freedom.

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Now, we’ve moved forward one week further into Lent. Once again, we hear an episode in Jesus’ life that we are familiar with. That we hear each year on the Second Sunday of Lent, whether from the perspective of Matthew, Mark, or Luke: The Transfiguration of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Each of the three evangelists has the same general outline of events:

Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a mountain;  
He was transfigured and appeared with Moses and Elijah;  
Peter said, “It is good for us to be here,” and offered to make three tents for them;  
A voice from a cloud said, “This is My Beloved Son. Listen to Him!”;  
Jesus led them back down the mountain and they told no one.

The general account is the same for each. But, as we did last week, let’s take a look at what is unique to Luke’s perspective, and see if it has anything for us to take with us through this Lent.

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One of the details that is unique to Luke is that he provides us more details about the encounter between Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. All three evangelists tell us that Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus. But only Luke tells us what they were talking *about*:

“Moses and Elijah ‘were conversing with [Jesus]...and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.’”<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, only Luke tells us what the *three Apostles were doing* during the conversation between these three holy men:

“Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep...”<sup>7</sup>

They were *overcome by sleep*. And, thus, they missed important information about how Jesus would accomplish His Mission in our world. They missed the conversation about Jesus’ Exodus – that is, His Passion and Death He was heading toward in Jerusalem, which would lead to the Glory of His Resurrection from the Dead and His Ascension into Heaven.

Because of their human frailty, they missed out on the details of the hard part. The cost that Jesus was going to pay to win us and set us free from death and slavery to sin. But, as Luke tells us, they did wake up. When did they wake up? Just as the conversation about His Passion was ending, the Apostles became “fully awake, [and] they saw his glory...”<sup>8</sup>

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My brothers and sisters, how easy it can be for us to do the same. We like to see Jesus in His Glory. That wakes us up. That gets our attention and attracts us. We like to think about the Glory of Heaven that God has Promised to all of us. But are we also willing to accept the cost that it takes to get there? Are we awake? Are we listening to Jesus?<sup>9</sup> Are we trusting God to show us the Way to that Glory?

Or, do we have our own conversation with God about another way? Do think of other “better” ways to get there? Do we sometimes make little accommodations or give up on our

Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving? These are the ways that Jesus has taught us with His preaching, and shown us with His life.<sup>10</sup> Quite simply, the Holy Season of Lent is the model season for us. It is the way that leads to Easter Glory.

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But life is not *all* Lent, is it? God gives us plenty of previews of the Glory of Heaven, that we can and do enjoy in this life. Just like Jesus did for the Apostles, He still gives us glimpses and foretastes of Heaven in this life.

Just look outside at our beautiful sunny day today. Can it be that we had two feet of snow on the ground just one month ago? And yet, here we are now, feeling the warmth of the sun before spring has even begun.<sup>11</sup> That's just one of countless blessings that God is pouring out on each one of us today and every day. Perhaps, during this Mass and throughout this day would be a good opportunity for each of us to look for, to acknowledge, and to thank God for all the glories that He is pouring out on us and showing us right now.

And here, inside this Church, we have the greatest sign of God's Glory being given to us in the Eucharist. For it is the Bread come down from Heaven. Our lowly human bodies are conformed with His Glorified Body when we receive Him in the Eucharist.<sup>12</sup> And in that moment, *we* are transfigured.<sup>13</sup> Our bodies and our lives become more and more like Christ's Glorified Body.<sup>14</sup>

*Are we awake to that reality?*

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My brothers and sisters, the Good News is that Jesus' work of redemption doesn't depend on us.<sup>15</sup> His work of redemption goes on whether we are awake or asleep. Even though the Apostles slept during Jesus' Transfiguration. Even though the Apostles slept during Jesus'

Agony in the Garden.<sup>16</sup> The Heavenly Father was still at work in His Son. Working out His plan for our Redemption. This is precisely why we can always trust the Father. He is always working for our good. Always working on us and for us in ways that we are not fully awake to. Even when we resist, grumble, doubt, or veer off the way the Lord has prepared for us. We can always trust and believe that Jesus continues to prepare the way for us.

This Lent, let our prayer be that we become more awake to what God is doing for us and the glories He is showing us. More trusting of Him to show us the Way to the Glory of Heaven. And let us pray this old prayer: “O Lord, You who have prepared a path for my soul, prepare my soul for that path.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 4:3, 5-6, 8-9

<sup>2</sup> Luke 4:3, 5-7, 9-11

<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:12

<sup>4</sup> See Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15 (from First Sunday of Lent)

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 17:1-9 (Year A); Mark 9:2-10 (Year B); Luke 9:28b-36 (Year C)

<sup>6</sup> Luke 9:30-31

<sup>7</sup> Luke 9:32

<sup>8</sup> Luke 9:32

<sup>9</sup> See Luke 9:35: “Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my chosen Son; listen to him.’”

<sup>10</sup> See Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18 (Gospel from Ash Wednesday): Jesus teaches us about the importance of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving

<sup>11</sup> See Song of Songs: “For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone.”

<sup>12</sup> Philippians 3:21

<sup>13</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 999: “...Christ ‘will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body’...”

and see *CCC* 1000: “...our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ’s transfiguration of our bodies:

Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God’s blessing has been invoked upon it, is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres.* 4, 18, 4-5).”

<sup>14</sup> See *CCC* 1392: “What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh ‘given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit,’ preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.”

Pope Urban IV: “Eating wounded us, and eating healed us. Thus the Saviour says, My Flesh is real food. This bread is taken but truly not consumed, because it is not transformed into the eater. Rather, if it is worthily received, the recipient is conformed to it.”

<sup>15</sup> For example, God the Father’s work of Resurrecting the Son did not depend on the Apostles’ ability to believe in the Resurrection. See *CCC* 644: “Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. ‘In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering.’ Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord’s last appearance in Galilee ‘some doubted.’ Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the

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apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.”

<sup>16</sup> Luke 22:39-46; also, Matthew 26:35-46 and Mark 14:32-42

<sup>17</sup> Prayer from Fr. Leo Clifford, OFM