

The Second Sunday of Lent

Lk 9:28-36

Dear Friends,

The Transfiguration story, this tantalizing peak at the glorious Christ, is in all three cycles of our Lenten celebration. At first glance, and even third glance, it is hard to figure out how it fits the somber message of Lent.

Peter had a hard time with the message of the Suffering Messiah the first time around. He could not connect his answer, the Messiah of God, to Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" (Lk 9:20) Peter's dilemma was this: Jesus was the Messiah. How could He suffer? Jesus just deepened Peter's confusion when referring to the disciple's acknowledgement of him being the Messiah, Jesus "**rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone.**" (Lk 9:21) No doubt we share Peter's confusion when we try to equate our belief in an all loving and an all-powerful God and the horror of Japan's catastrophe at Hiroshima. Peter's dilemma is our dilemma. How do we link the divine goodness and suffering on an incomprehensible scale and even the consistent occurrence of affliction in our daily lives? We witness the slaughter in our cities and the total waste of life, both young and old, as a result of the gangs. Much bigger than the problem of immigration is the gross poverty around the world that forces people to leave their homes.

In the Transfiguration, Jesus reaffirms his divinity. However, He does this on the road to Jerusalem where He will be rejected, suffer and die. Then the Father says, "**This is my Chosen Son. Listen to him.**" (Lk 9:35) This is the key to the placement of the Transfiguration story on this second Sunday of our Lenten journey. Here we will find the way out of Peter's confusion and our confusion.

The message the Father wants the disciples to hear is clear. Jesus is the Suffering Messiah and the disciples need to follow him. "**If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.**" (Lk 9:23)

Jesus makes this message more breathtaking in his conversation with Moses and Elijah. "**and he spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.** (Lk 9:31) This was his path to the fullness of the Kingdom through his Passion, Death and Resurrection. Lent is a time to prepare to celebrate the Death and Resurrection of Jesus the Christ with new joy, stronger faith and growing love. This is the great mystery of our faith and our life, As many times as we have heard the story, it still holds the seeds of light and wisdom, of hope and tenderness. It reminds us how close God is to us and how thin the curtain between the divine and human truly is. We are always on the edge of our human frailty and mortality. Equally, we are on the edge of eternal life and happiness. Whether it is the brokenness of our relationships, the consequences of sin, or the corruption of our world, we need to search the depths of our hearts and "**Listen to Him!**" (Lk 9:35) He will reveal anew that the last word is not sickness, injustice, prejudice, and the foibles of nature's awesome power or even death. The last word revealed in the Crucified and Risen Christ is life and the victory of love. Once again, our journey to Jerusalem in Lent and, more so in our life, is an invitation to enter into the mystery. This mystery joins the Divine and suffering, the suffering and glorious Messiah. It leads to the victory of Easter.