

## Homily: Second Sunday of Lent (Year C) 2022

Last week at Mass we heard the Gospel account of the temptation of Jesus in the desert, as we do every year on the first Sunday of Lent. Today we hear an account of His transfiguration, again, as we do each year. We always hear of these same events on the first weekends of Lent, not because the Church lacks imagination, but because they are signposts to what is to come. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He confronted evil and won. It was a sign of His final, decisive victory, when He faced evil and death and defeated them on the cross. So the temptations of Jesus, in a sense, point us to His death. At the Transfiguration, meanwhile, Jesus' glory is shown, and so we see in this event a sign of the Lord's resurrection, when His glory and His divinity will finally be made clear to His apostles.

We're told that Jesus and His disciples had climbed a mountain when this took place. From the top of a mountain, it's possible to see further into the distance, and this event shows a new horizon: now, for the first time, Peter, John and James get a glimpse of the glory of Jesus which they will fully appreciate only after He rises from the dead. There are also many pointers to the Lord's death in this passage. Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus and speak with Him about His 'passing' (the Greek word that is used here is 'Exodus') which He will accomplish in Jerusalem. They are speaking of His death and resurrection. The three disciples are heavy with sleep; these same three will find themselves unable to stay awake with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His arrest. And this event takes place precisely at the time Jesus begins to predict His death and resurrection. Now, on the top of the mountain, this new horizon becomes visible.

St Luke also records another important detail for us. He tells us that Jesus went up the mountain *to pray*, and that it was while He prayed that "the aspect of His face was changed, and His clothing became brilliant as lightning." It was as Jesus prayed that He began to show His light. There is an important encouragement here for all of us: it is through prayer that we reflect God's light to the world. As we pray, the aspect of our faces is changed; our lives begin to shine more brightly with God's glory. Without prayer, this cannot happen. In Lent, we try to spend extra time in prayer precisely so that we can receive and reflect the glory of God.

Prayer reveals the glory of Jesus to us. We sometimes get a glimpse of who He really is, of His presence, His mercy, His closeness to us. We may experience this very intensely, though usually only briefly. Perhaps these moments of real closeness to the Lord, these brief windows in which we really perceive His love and His glory, are our sharing in the Transfiguration. These moments encourage and strengthen us in our lives of faith, just as the three apostles were encouraged and strengthened by seeing Christ's glory on Mount Tabor.

The Transfiguration – and our sharing in it through prayer – also open up for us the ultimate horizon of our lives. They show us what awaits us when our lives on earth are ended – not death, but a sharing in the glory of the Lord. St Paul speaks of this in today's second reading, when he says that our bodies will ultimately be transfigured in glory. The

Transfiguration of Jesus is a glimpse of His glory in the present, a glory which will also be ours in the future. So this Gospel today is a signpost not only of the Lord's resurrection, but of ours too. It encourages and strengthens us to press forward in our faith. It reminds us of the benefit of 'climbing the mountain', so to speak, living our spiritual lives and drawing closer to God. Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we seek to draw close to the Lord this Lent. May He bless our efforts and lead us to glory.

Fr Andrew

