

2nd Sunday of Lent, Year A

GOSPEL

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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.'

(Matthew 17:1–9)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- This event is known as 'the transfiguration'.
- Moses was a great figure who represented the law for Israel. Elijah represented the prophets. Readings from the law and the prophets made up the Scriptures of Israel. Here Matthew shows Jesus in conversation with them; thus Jesus is in harmony with everything revealed in Judaism.
- The voice from heaven here echoes the words that were used at the baptism of Jesus.
- Traditionally, this scene of the transfiguration is associated with Mount Tabor, which rises out of the Plain of Esdraelon.

EXPLORING THE WORD

In the later part of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus warns his disciples that he must journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die and to rise again. He begins his journey towards his fate, but that journey is interrupted by this wondrous moment where he is revealed as the glorious Messiah, the beloved Son of God. In the language of this text, there are echoes of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah coming in glory at the end of time. Through the appearance of Moses and Elijah in this scene, Matthew links Jesus intimately with Jewish expectation. The law, represented by Moses, established a covenant with the chosen people, and it was the role of the prophets, represented by Elijah, to constantly remind the people of their covenant obligations. Both the law and the prophets looked forward to God's final intervention in human history, and here, Jesus is presented as that intervention. The disciples want to capture this moment and freeze it in time by building shrines, but Jesus is adamant that the journey must continue to its final outcome, which will confirm God's action in human history. It is not until Christ has been raised that the truth of this vision will be known.

- How do you look forward to your baptism or reception? Will it be a single moment of glory and joy?
- How will you continue the journey after that moment has been experienced?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How do you expect to be transformed through baptism?
- 'It is wonderful for us to be here.' What does this phrase mean to you at the moment?
- What glimpses of the glory of God do you see in your daily life?
- Have you ever had an experience that caused you to see another person in an entirely different light? Or an experience of seeing attributes in someone that had never been revealed to you before? Share your reflections.
- 'It is wonderful for us to be here.' This week make a special effort to recognise the gifts of each day. Be aware of and rejoice in those small moments of joy or wonder or 'revelation' that often slip by unnoticed. Reflect on these for a time each evening as you review your day.
- Use today's response to the psalm as your prayer this week:

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

This text affirms the very early Christian belief that Jesus was both God and man. This dual nature is one of the foundational beliefs of the Church: 'He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth of faith against heresies that falsified it' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §464).

- The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides a brief explanation of some of the false ideas on the nature of Jesus (§§465–469). Use these as a basis for discussion of how we have come to understand the nature of Christ and his saving ministry.
- Examine the text in the Creed that affirms our faith in the dual nature of Jesus as God and man.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

In the Old Testament, mountaintops were important as places of encounter with God. Both Moses and Elijah experienced the power and presence of God on mountaintops, just as Jesus does in this gospel. Where do you experience the most profound sense of God's presence in your life? Where is your sacred place?

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- Are there plans in your parish or local ecumenical community to commemorate the journey of Jesus to his cross through a pilgrimage in the streets or a local park? Are there ways the elect can be involved? Perhaps the elect could be encouraged to join a Way of the Cross at a central location. Find out dates and venues.
- Use an icon image showing the divinity of Jesus as the focus for prayer. Pray the Creed together. Pray for each other as you near the end of your journey. A suitable song could be 'Glorious in majesty' (GA 370). Conclude with the prayer of exorcism in the *RCIA* at §93G.

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