

March 5, 2023 – Second Sunday of Lent  
The Personal Transformation Needed to Conceive the Spirit of Lent  
Gospel of Matthew 17:1-9  
Fr. Oliver

Every second Sunday of Lent in each year is called Transfiguration Sunday. The main purpose why Jesus was transfigured was to prepare the apostles for the sad event of Holy Week where Jesus sacrificed, died, and nailed on the cross because of His great love for each one of us. In other words, he prepared them for His upcoming suffering. Buddhism teaches different truths about life. The first truth is: Life is suffering. Look at the situation around us; these situations can prove that life is such. Look at the faces of those patients in hospitals who are suffering from pain and sickness, they are not smiling or they cannot smile. Hear the cries of sorrow for the departed loved ones. If you try to listen to stories of people, their stories are full of trials, difficulties, and failures. That is why Buddhism teaches that life is full of pain.

The first reading describes the transformation of a pagan patriarch into a believer in the one God. His name will be transformed from Abram to Abraham and his small family into a great nation. All Abram must do is to obey the Lord God's command, and he does so.

The second reading, taken from St. Paul's second letter to Timothy, explains the type of Lenten transformation expected of us. We are transformed when we recognize the hand of a loving, providing, and disciplining God behind all our hardships, pain, and suffering and try our best to grow in holiness by cooperating with the grace of God given to us through Jesus and his Gospel.

In the Transfiguration story in today's Gospel, Jesus is revealed as a glorious figure, superior to Moses and Elijah. The primary purpose of Jesus' Transfiguration was to allow Jesus to consult his Heavenly Father in order to ascertain His plan for His Son's suffering, death and Resurrection. The secondary aim was to make his chosen disciples aware of Jesus' Divine glory, so that they might discard their worldly ambitions and dreams of a conquering political Messiah and might be strengthened in their time of trial. On the mountain, Jesus is identified by the Heavenly Voice as the Son of God. Thus, the Transfiguration narrative is a Christophany, that is, a manifestation or revelation of who Jesus really is. Describing Jesus' Transfiguration, the Gospel gives us a glimpse of the Heavenly glory awaiting those who do God's will by putting their trusting Faith in Him, as the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 33), for today encourages us to do.

My dear friends, in each Holy Mass our offering of bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus under the unchanged appearances of bread and wine. Hence, just as Jesus' Transfiguration strengthened the Apostles in their time of trial, each Holy Mass should be our source of Heavenly strength against our own temptations and our source for the renewal of our lives during Lent. In addition, communion with Jesus in prayer and in the Eucharist, should be a source of daily transformation for both our minds and hearts. We must also be transformed by becoming humbler and more selfless, sharing love, compassion, and forgiveness with others. But in our everyday lives, we often fail to recognize Jesus when he

appears to us "transfigured", hidden in someone who is in some kind of need. Jesus will be happy when we attend to the needs of that person. With the eyes of Faith, we must see Jesus in every one of our brothers and sisters, the children of God we come across each day, and, by His grace, respond to Jesus in each of them, with love and service.

There is a story of a father trying to explain Lent to his ten-year-old son. At one point, the father said, "You ought to give up something for Lent, something you will really miss, like candy." The boy thought for a moment, then asked, "What are you giving up, Father?" "I'm giving up liquor," the father replied. "But before dinner you were drinking something," the boy protested. "Yes, but that was only sherry," said the father. "I gave up hard liquor." To which the boy replied, "Well then, I think I'll give up hard candy."

Today's scene of transfiguration reminds us that in moments of doubt and during feelings of despair, the expectation of our transformation in Heaven helps us to reach out to God and listen to His consoling words: "This is my beloved son/daughter in whom I am well pleased." Similarly, we can share experiences like those of Peter, James, and John when we spend some extra time with Jesus in prayer during Lent. Perhaps we may want to fast for one day, taking only water, thus releasing spiritual energy, which in turn, can lift our thoughts to a higher plane. Such a fast may also help us to remember the starving millions in the world and make us more willing to help them.