

LENT 2
Gen 12:1-4
2Tim 1:8-10
Mt 17:1-9

The story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis describes the reason for the fracturing, but not destruction, of the relationship between humanity and God. The story of Abraham and his willingness to be open to God's will and leave his father and his homeland to undertake a journey to an unknown destination, is the beginning of the path towards the reconciliation of humanity to God, between heaven and earth and the union of the spiritual and the temporal. This unity occurred through the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross where St John's gospel tells us that God's glory was revealed.

Peter, James and John catch a glimpse of that glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. St Matthew's gospel records that it was there that Jesus' face shone like the sun as Moses' face had done when he received the 10 Commandments. Jesus' clothes became dazzling white like those of the angel on Easter morning and like those of the righteous at the heavenly banquet when God's Kingdom comes in its fulness.

On the mountain Jesus was joined by Moses and Elijah. These men represent the Law and the Prophets, but their presence means more than that. God had promised Moses that he would raise up a prophet like himself who would reveal God's will (Deut 18:15-19) and the Apostles believed that Jesus was this person. The prophet Malachi said that Elijah would appear before God's glory was fully revealed and Jewish Rabbis who have commented on Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy Rabba 3:17) said that before that day came, Moses would accompany him. Their appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration is a sign that God's plan of salvation would soon be completed.

As usual, St Peter blurts out words about building tents for the three without really thinking what he is saying. Before he finished speaking, the cloud of God's glory covered Jesus as it had covered Moses. The voice speaks from the cloud as it had at Jesus' baptism, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him. Jesus' baptism of Purification before he began his ministry and his sacrifice on Calvary are linked in his Transfiguration.

Jesus' Transfiguration is not the end, so Jesus tells his apostles not to be afraid. The cloud, voice and prophets disappear and Jesus is left to head to Jerusalem to continue his mission.

On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus is flanked by two great prophets. On the cross it is two thieves. Jesus' clothes shine on the mountain but are taken from him on Calvary. On the mountain the divine voice declares him to be God's Son, On Calvary the voice of God is silent, but his executioners acknowledge his divinity. God's glory revealed in Jesus' transfiguration is witnessed at close range by the inner circle of his apostles. The glory of his sacrifice on Calvary is witnessed by his mother, her friends and St John standing at a distance.

The glory of the Transfiguration and the glory of the Cross are two sides of the same coin. No wonder St Paul urges Timothy to preach the good news of God's salvation through the Cross of Christ and his Resurrection no matter how hard it may be or how costly it is.

St Matthew is making it clear to his readers that the mission of Jesus to announce the presence of the Kingdom of God is the mission Jesus gave to his Church when he gathered them together on another mountain before his Ascension into heaven.

The account of Jesus' transfiguration encourages us not to be afraid as we follow Jesus down the mountain and along the Way of the Cross to witness the glory and love radiating from the sacrificial self-offering of the Lamb of God on the Cross.

Cardinal Sarah urges us to keep our hand in God's and live our lives with the same sacrificial love that is expressed on the Cross and nourished by the sacrifice of the altar during the mass (The Day is Far Spent). Avanti! Let us head towards Jerusalem.

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