

Sunday Message

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face.
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face from me.

COLLECT

O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Gen 12:1-4

A reading from the Book of Genesis.
The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing. "I will bless those who bless you: I will curse those who slight you. All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you." So Abram went as the Lord told him.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 32 (33):4-5, 18-20, 22

Response:
May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you.

- The word of the Lord is faithful and all his works to be trusted. The Lord loves justice and right and fills the earth with his love. (R.)
- The Lord looks on those who reverence him, on those who hope in his love, to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine. (R.)
- Our soul is waiting for the Lord. The Lord is our help and our shield. May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you. (R.)

SECOND READING

2 Tm 1:8-10

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to Timothy.
With me, bear the hardships for the sake of the Good News, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy - not because of anything we ourselves have done but for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace had already been granted to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time, but it has only been revealed by the appearing of our saviour Christ Jesus. He abolished death, and he has proclaimed life and immortality through the Good News.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!
From the bright cloud the Father's voice was heard:
"This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him."
Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

GOSPEL

Mt 17:1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.
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."
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, cleanse us of our faults and sanctify your faithful in body and mind for the celebration of the paschal festivities. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

This is my beloved Son,
with whom I am well pleased;
listen to him.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive these glorious mysteries, we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord, for allowing us while still on earth to be partakers even now of the things of heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE

Bless your faithful, we pray, O Lord, with a blessing that endures for ever, and keep them faithful to the Gospel of your Only Begotten Son, so that they may always desire and at last attain that glory whose beauty he showed in his own Body, to the amazement of his Apostles. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lent stimulates us to let the Word of God penetrate our life and in this way to know the fundamental truth: who we are, where we come from, where we must go, what path we must take in life.

Pope Benedict XVI

THE WORD



Everyone needs good friends

Every year the story of the transfiguration is read on the Second Sunday of Lent. Jesus takes three of his friends up a mountain to pray with him.
While there, something extraordinary happens. It's as if Peter, James and John are caught up in a dream and, suddenly, they see Jesus in all his heavenly glory with Moses and Elijah, two of the great Old Testament figures. They see Jesus as he really is - transformed, radiant. Peter is so overcome by what he sees that he wishes it could last forever. He suggests constructing three tents or temporary dwelling places - one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. But soon the vision ends, and when the three look up, they see 'only Jesus.' The moment has passed but it is one they will never forget.

It is telling that the three disciples Jesus chooses to accompany him to the mountain top are Peter, James and John. Jesus had selected a group of 12 to be his inner circle, as it were. But among that group, it seems these three friends were especially close to him.

Peter, James and John are present with Jesus at some of the most crucial moments of his life. He selects these three to accompany him (along with her parents) when he restores the daughter of Jarius to life. They see with their own eyes that Jesus is the Lord of life, who has authority even over death. These are the three he asks to accompany him to the garden of Gethsemane in his hour of greatest need before his passion and death. And today's Gospel tells us that these are the three who witness his transfiguration, when he is revealed in all his glory.

Jesus wanted Peter, James and John to witness these pivotal moments in his life. They would be able to speak of these events after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. But Jesus probably also turned to them as good friends. He needed their companionship, their support, their presence. He had many followers and acquaintances but he felt the very human need for some closer, more intimate, friendships. Clearly, Peter, James and John had the qualities Jesus was looking for, and so they became his 'right-hand' men, those he regarded as his most trusted associates.

Jesus knew the importance of friendship. In his humanity, he knew that good friendships make life more enjoyable and that good friends help us through the difficult times that will inevitably come our way. ■

LEARN

The reason the transfiguration takes place at this time in Matthew's Gospel is to give the disciples a boost. Jesus knows there will be tough times ahead. He knows what will happen to him in Jerusalem and that life will be difficult for his followers. The transfiguration is a little glimpse of heaven. It shows them who Jesus really is, and gives them a foretaste of what awaits them if they remain faithful to their Master.

PRAY

Pray for your friends. Thank God for the gift of true friendship.

SAY

"Lord, help me to live in such a way as to enjoy your company in heaven forever. Amen."

DO

On the mountaintop, the three disciples saw Jesus in his radiant glory. Try to see the God-given beauty in all you meet.

REFLECT

One of the most wonderful opportunities created by the internet is how it allows people to communicate instantly practically anywhere. It is possible to go online and chat with people thousands of miles away. It was a great help to people forced to practise social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

But social media and the world wide web have significant downsides, as we now know only too well. We live in the era of fake news and of deepfake technology. You can create a deepfake video or image of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, typically used maliciously or to spread false information. Artificial Intelligence is making this technology ever more sophisticated and difficult to detect.

It means we can't always be sure whether a news item or story is true or false. And we won't always know for sure whether a stranger we are chatting to online is who they claim to be. Just as in everyday life we can wear a mask so that others won't know what we're really thinking, or to protect ourselves from being hurt, so also people can create false digital profiles or personas in order to make themselves more appealing or conceal their true intentions. For whatever reason, they do not want to reveal their real selves, their true face.

In the story of the transfiguration Jesus revealed his true face to his three closest friends. They saw him as he really is in his heavenly glory. The literal meaning of "transfiguration" is to show one's true face. And that's what happened on the mountain top - Peter, James and John saw Jesus' radiant, glorified face. They saw him as he really is - and it took their breath away. They wanted the moment to last forever.

Today's Gospel challenges us to be honest in our relationship with God and others. God loves us as we are and knows us better than we know ourselves. We need not be afraid to show him our true face. Good friendships depend on the willingness to show our true face, be our true selves. That's how we build friendships that last. ■