

My Dear people of God,

Today we celebrate the second Sunday of Lent as we enter into the second week of this holy season. The Liturgy of the Word this Sunday puts before us the account of the transfiguration of Jesus. On Mount Tabor, the apostles Peter, James and John got a glimpse of the **heavenly glory** of Jesus as the Son of God. So wonderful was this experience that Simon Peter exclaimed: **‘Lord, it is good for us to be here.’**

The experience of the transfiguration follows on Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi. These two events, the transfiguration on Mount Tabor and confession at Caesarea Philippi are intimately related. At Caesarea Philippi, Peter had declared that Jesus was the Messiah. In response, Jesus had made a threefold disclosure: that the Messiah must suffer, that his followers (disciples) must be prepared to share His suffering, and more importantly that His suffering and their suffering must be seen against a background of the ultimate and certain glory that awaits in heaven. Now at the mountain of transfiguration, the disciples have a prevision/foretaste of the glory to come in heaven, and to hear the voice of God inviting them to listen and heed the words of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is important to note that the same disciples who witnessed and experienced the transfiguration of Jesus (*Peter, James and John*) are the same who witnessed His agony in the garden of Gethsemane. This is a clear indication that there is a very important connection between these two events in the life of Jesus: Mount Tabor (*the transfiguration*) and Mount Calvary (*the agony in the garden*).

On Mount Tabor, as we read in the gospel today, it was probably daytime, the sky was bright and Jesus was praying. As He prayed, His face shone and His clothes became dazzling white. Then appeared besides Him, Moses, the great giver of the Law (*the Commandments*) and Elijah, the greatest of the prophets. A luminous cloud overshadowed them, symbolizing the presence of God. Then out of the cloud came a voice of God saying to them: **“This is my chosen Son, listen to Him.”** So wonderful was the experience that Peter exclaimed; **‘Lord it is good for us to be here! If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’**

It is evident that Peter wanted to stay in the mountain and to build a safe haven there, away from all the trouble and danger they had left down below. But the purpose of this experience was not to encourage escape. It was meant to comfort and strengthen them so that they would be able to go back and face the trouble and danger they left behind and more important what lay ahead of them.

On the other hand, later on the Mount of Calvary, it was night, the sky was dark. The face of Jesus was covered with sweat and blood. His clothes did not dazzle, rather they were taken away from Him. For companions he had two criminals! There was no voice from heaven, but only the voice of scoffers and mockers and the apostles wanted no part of it. The only thing in common with the transfiguration experience was that Jesus was praying. From this it is clear that what sustained Jesus in bright and dark moments alike was His special relationship with the Father. That relationship was ground beneath His feet all lifelong.

A question we may be asking ourselves is: **‘how is this relevant to us’?** My dear brothers and sisters, even though we may never have been or will never go to the Holy Land, all of us are familiar with both *Mount Tabor* and *Mount Calvary*. Mount Tabor is the hill of joy and exaltation. It is the hill of consolations where we too have moments of transfiguration, moments of light and

joy. At these moments we hear the voice of the Lord whispering in our ears: '*you are my beloved son, you are my beloved daughter.*' And like the apostles, we are reassured and strengthened. On the other hand, we all are familiar with Mount Calvary, the hill of sorrow and pain. It is the hill of desolation. All of us have moments when life is dark and difficult. At these moments, it may seem as if God has abandoned us and we are on our own. In those moments, we must do what Jesus did on Calvary, that is, turn to God in prayer and commit our cause to Him.

My dear brothers and sisters, the road of suffering is narrow and difficult. But it is not the same when we recognize that Jesus too travelled it and as such a bright light illuminates it. Even though it leads to Calvary, it doesn't end there. It ends at Easter. Those who link their sufferings with those of Christ will share His resurrection glory at Easter and will become a source of blessing to others.

As we continue on our journey of faith through this Lenten season, and as the bodily discipline of Lent begins to take a toll on our bodies, let the words of St Paul be a source of encouragement for us: "***I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.***" Romans 18:18

Thanks and God bless

Fr Simon Peter