

2ND SUNDAY OF LENT—Year B—M02-D28-Y2021

01. In today's Gospel, we hear Mark's account of the dramatic story of Jesus' Transfiguration. The word transfiguration itself means: ***a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state***. And this is exactly what is depicted—as Mark gives us a preview of **the glorious, cosmic transformation that will soon be accomplished by the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ**.
02. This story of the Transfiguration reminds me of one of my **all-time favourite science fiction films—Steven Spielberg's: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind***. In this classic movie from the 70's, a family man, named Roy, becomes **obsessed with establishing contact with extra-terrestrial life** after his hometown in the state of Indiana is inundated with UFO sightings.
03. Roy's obsession reaches a climax when he decides to leave his hometown to journey to Wyoming—where a group of scientists, and military officials, have set up a command post on top of a **HUGE NATURAL MONUMENT called, IRONICALLY, devil's tower—ALL** in the hopes of establishing contact **with the aliens**.
04. Eventually, Roy is able to break into the command post—and is **so overcome with the awe and wonder of the alien life forms, that he doesn't want to leave their presence**.
05. Even though the movie doesn't really explore this element in an explicit way—I think one of the things that was missing in Roy's life—and one of the things **he was searching for ALL ALONG**—was that transcendent beauty and splendour that **is God, and God alone** — in other words, he was searching for the DIVINE—for something **OUTSIDE HIMSELF, GREATER THAN HIMSELF—that would bring some sense of meaning and purpose to his mundane existence—and provide some explanation as to his place in the universe**.

06. But, in the end, Roy was willing to settle for the beauty and splendour of **created things (AND created beings) rather than the beauty and splendour of the Creator Himself.**
07. And this is a good reminder for us to consider how often we TOO are willing to settle for the beauty and splendour of created things (**or EVEN created persons**) OVER AND ABOVE the beauty and splendour of the Creator Himself — **and how often (whether we are aware of it or not) we search for the divine in created goods, rather than in God Himself, the Source of ALL good.**
08. Because like Roy in *Close Encounters*, man is always searching for **the transcendent—for the divine—for the beauty and splendour that is God** — it's just that OFTEN, we are **COMPLETELY UNAWARE that we are in deed searching for that beauty and splendour that is God**—and we're also often very confused about where to find it.
09. And, to some extent, so was St. Peter. For he had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He was sent by God — but I don't think he fully understood (at least at the time) that **JESUS WAS GOD**—and that Jesus was the answer to ALL his searching for the DIVINE—for something **outside himself, greater than himself, that would bring meaning and purpose to his existence.**
10. And, until the Transfiguration, I don't think Peter really understood that **within the Person of Jesus Himself was that transcendent beauty, that divine splendour he was searching for** — and that he didn't have to search for God, because God Himself **was searching for HIM**—and was now in his very midst.
11. And, before the Transfiguration, Peter was most likely unaware that **such divine glory and majesty could be hidden in the figure of a human being** — just like some people have a hard time believing that **the glory and majesty of God is contained in a simple piece of bread.**
12. But there are times when I am alone with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that I feel very much like Peter in the Transfiguration—to

the point that **it's hard for me to leave because I'm experiencing the glorious Presence of God in and through the Eucharist.**

13. Because sometimes, we mistakenly believe that we have to **literally (and symbolically) climb to the top of a mountain to experience the wonder and beauty of God**—or that we can ONLY experience the divine in **THE GRANDIOSE AND THE EXTRAORDINARY**—when often, the beauty and wonder of God is **found in the most simple, the most mundane, and the most ordinary of experiences** — found EVEN in such things as changing diapers—washing dishes—sweeping the floor—getting someone a drink of water.
14. Because **whenever we do EVEN THESE MOST ORDINARY OF THINGS** for the love of God, and the love of another, God is in our midst—and his beauty and splendour surrounds us.
15. But, like Roy, we are sometimes quick to **DISMISS THE ORDINARY AND THE MUNDANE**, in the mistaken belief that **the divine beauty and purpose we are searching for can't possibly be there** — when, in reality, we just need to get better at **recognizing God in the SIMPLE and the ORDINARY** — because, God's Presence is not limited to those experiences which are **OUT OF THE ORDINARY**—and because, **AGAIN, it is through the simple and the mundane that we will often experience the divine splendour that is God, and God alone.**
16. There's a line in today's Gospel that I think is really key in recognizing God in the everyday experiences of life; and that line is: ***"...when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus..."***. For when we see **ONLY JESUS**—when we make Him **THE FOCUS** of our existence—it is then that we will begin to experience **the glory and majesty of God in the ordinary experiences of our day to day lives** — and it is ONLY when we keep our eyes on Jesus that we will begin to see Him everywhere—to see Him **IN ALL THINGS AND AT ALL TIMES**—to see Him even in the midst of a pandemic.

17. This is one of the countless benefits of the Incarnation—of God becoming man—that **God has now touched EVERY ASPECT of our existence—and is now present and available to us in ALL PLACES AND AT ALL TIMES — but, AGAIN, we just need to get better at being aware of His Presence—especially in something as simple as the Eucharist—because if we can’t see God in the Eucharist—we won’t be able to see Him in the ordinary experiences of life EITHER.**
18. The story of the Transfiguration also has me thinking about another movie—a movie I’ve wanted to see for a little while now, and that I finally got to see a couple of weeks ago — a movie I’m sure you’ve all heard of called: *Wonder Woman 1984*.
19. To be honest, **I really didn’t like the movie, and was rather disappointed in it—but I still recommend it because I thought it had a good message about being careful what you wish for.**
20. For those who haven’t seen it (**and this NOT a spoiler by the way**)—a lot of the movie is about people making all sorts of wishes for different things that they want—**just like Peter makes a wish in today’s Gospel.**
21. Because of this, the movie had me thinking about **the difference between a wish and prayer—and why it is that some prayers don’t seem to get answered.**
22. **First, I would say that a wish is usually more selfish—it’s usually more about what the self wants no matter what the consequences are to others—or even the consequences to one’s OWN self—because sometimes we want things and wish for things that aren’t really good for us to have.**
23. A prayer, on the other hand, **is usually more SELFLESS, as opposed to selfish—it’s usually more focused on God and others RATHER than the self—and it’s usually more concerned about what is truly good for others, as opposed to what the self simply wants. Prayer can also be about what is good for the self—but in a way that**

is healthy and balanced, and that **takes into consideration the consequences to others and to one's own self.**

24. Second, a wish is more about A FALSE LOVE OF SELF—in other words, it's more **about pleasing the SELF at all costs—loving the self in an unhealthy way to the point that we give ourselves everything that we want**—or we feel that we're ENTITLED to have everything that we want.
25. A prayer on the other hand **is not about pleasing the self—and giving the self everything it desires**—but more about what is **truly good for the self to have, and what the self really needs** — in other words, prayer is more about a **proper, true, and healthy love of self** as opposed to a false love of self.
26. Third, a wish **isn't at all concerned with God's Will, and what HE wants—it's only concerned with the WILL OF THE SELF—and with the coming of our own KINGDOM** — whereas a prayer (A TRUE PRAYER) **is more concerned with God's Will and what He wants**—on God's Kingdom coming and God's will being done — **and a true prayer is open to accepting God's Will even IF God's Will is difficult and doesn't feel good.**
27. Finally, a wish is usually not borne out of wisdom—**but PURELY out of desire — a desire that might be good, but that still doesn't take wisdom into consideration** — MEANING: a wish doesn't consider the truth that **what we desire may not be good for us to have.**
28. A prayer on the other hand is borne out of wisdom—because a true prayer **recognizes that it's not good for us to have everything that we desire**—EVEN if it appears to be good and even if it feels good—**because, again, what may feel good is not always good for us to have.**
29. And this what we see in today's Gospel as **St. Peter says: *Rabbi, it is good for us to be here.*** But even though it felt good and seemed good for them to remain there—**Peter's request was lacking wisdom**

— for the glory that Peter experienced would only be possible because of the wisdom and the power of the Cross.

30. So, Jesus denies Peter his wish because Our Lord knows that it is not good for us to have **the glory that the Cross brings without the Cross itself** — that it's not good for us to have **gain without pain**—to have **victory without sacrifice** — because **gain without pain, and victory without sacrifice is ultimately empty and meaningless.**
31. Like Peter, sometimes we may desire something **that seems good and feels good—but that God in His infinite Wisdom knows may ultimately not be in our best interest**—because, like a good and wise parent, God knows it's not good for His children to have everything that they want.
32. And this is why some prayers **don't seem to get answered, at least initially**—because some prayers are really **WISHES IN DISGUISE** — and if everyone got everything that they wished for **the world would be total chaos.**
33. Don't get me wrong, it's okay to want things and to wish for things, **as long as we don't confuse a wish with a prayer**—and don't confuse something **that simply feels good with something that is truly good for us to have.**
34. And so, as we continue to journey through Lent, let us make sure that when we pray, we don't treat God **like a genie in the sky—someone we go to only when we want Him to grant our wishes** — and let us make sure that our prayers are not simply **wishes in disguise.** Because true prayer is born out of wisdom and is open to God's Will — **for even it doesn't feel good, God's Will is ultimately what is absolutely best for us. AMEN.**