

With a simple app on a smartphone, you can take a picture of yourself and see how you will age 10, 20, 30 even 50 years from when the photo was taken. As we age, we know that our bodies will change and that try as we might, we cannot stop the process. In ages past, explorers sailed the seven seas looking for the fountain of youth. If we are truly looking to defy the aging process, we need to look to God rather than some mythical place on earth.

Our Gospel gives us a glimpse into that eternal future where God yearns to meet us face to face. In the Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John get a firsthand glimpse of the future. They see the glorified (or transfigured) body of Jesus whose clothes become whiter than humanly possible.

Jesus has already told his disciples “that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days” (Mk 8:31). The disciples did not sign on to follow a suffering servant, so Jesus reemphasizes that discipleship requires self-denial. Pick up your cross and follow Jesus. This is hard for the disciples to grasp, so Jesus must show them the bigger picture through the Transfiguration. Yes, life involves pain and suffering and loss. But life does not end with death, we are reborn to eternal life.

Through Elijah, there is confirmation that all that the prophets foretold will come to pass. Through Moses, we are reminded of that special relationship with the Chosen People. Moses led them out of slavery and into the Promised Land. The glorified and transfigured body of Christ points to something even greater, the new Promised Land of Eternity. Jesus will lead the human race out of slavery to sin. Death will be conquered. Christ will rise again. “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5).

Jesus is aware of how devastated his disciples will be when he is crucified. The Transfiguration, this foretaste of the future, will help them to put things in perspective. It will help them to maintain a grip on eternal reality even though all on earth will have seemingly gone wrong.

Just as Peter, James, and John witness the Transfiguration of Jesus, we too are given a glimpse into our own future. Heaven awaits the faithful who will see the glorified Jesus face to face. Jesus is the beloved Son of the Father. We are called to listen to Jesus that we may one day see the face of God the Father and hear him speak to us as beloved children.

With our death, we know our body perishes but the soul lives on. In purgatory, purification awaits us in order to prepare us to see the glorified Jesus in all of his splendor along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And when Jesus comes a second time, we can look forward to our eternal soul in a glorified body of our own.

While that future of glory in heaven will come in due time, we must also focus on what happens beforehand. Jesus suffered and died. We too must pass through the doors of death with all the redemptive suffering that entails. Let us take a step backward to our first reading where Abraham is willing to offer his son Isaac to God:

The sacrifice of Isaac anticipates that of Christ... He who withheld Abraham’s arm when he was at the point of immolating Isaac, did not hesitate to sacrifice his own Son for our redemption. **Abraham’s sacrifice thus emphasizes the fact that human sacrifices must never be performed anywhere**, since the only true and perfect sacrifice is that of the only-begotten and eternal Son of the living God... Jesus voluntarily sacrificed himself once and for all, as a victim in expiation for our sins, thereby obtaining total and definitive salvation for us (cf. Heb 10:5-10). After the sacrifice of the Son of God, no

further human expiation is necessary since his sacrifice on the Cross includes and surpasses all others that man could offer God. Here is the heart of the paschal mystery.ⁱ

In our Lenten fasting, we are invited to let go of the things of this world in little ways so that when our death comes, we can fully embrace God's eternal plan for us. We know that we cannot pass through this world to the next without letting go of everything. We will experience our own passion and death. Let us pray for a happy death that we might in some small way aid Jesus in helping to redeem the world. In death we leave behind all worldly goods in order to receive a share in God's divinity. Like Moses and Elijah, Jesus invites us to the eternal banquet.

ⁱ vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19970223.html