

**The Bells of St. Mary's
The Church of the Immaculate Conception**

**Second Sunday of Lent
March 8th, 2020**

From Fr. Anthony Ekanem, MSP

~ The Transfiguration of Jesus ~

Each year on this second Sunday of the penitential season, the Church puts before us this incredible story of our Lord's Transfiguration on the mountain to help us reflect on the mission of Jesus and make a conscious effort to avoid sin and be faithful to the Gospel. Here is today's Gospel reading from Matthew 17:1-9, we heard His face shone, and His clothes became dazzlingly white because something significant has taken place in Him and the presence of these closest followers. This was a decisive and defining moment for Jesus with His apostles witnessing, which represents the New Testament. We heard that Jesus was conversing with Moses and Elijah who represents the Law and the prophets. We, too, can uniquely be transformed if we endeavor to take the discipline of this Lenten Season seriously: by faithfully journeying with Jesus into the desert, by fasting and praying like Him these 40 days, and by gladly doing our works of charity for our sisters and brothers with penance. Jesus had something in mind when He took with Peter, James and John up a high mountain. They were to be witnesses of this experience after He is gone. They were not to lose heart, not to be discouraged or scandalized when they see Him suffer. But Peter, in his way of responding, told Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." This time around, Jesus did not rebuke him, as He did with Satan, the tempter in our last Sunday's Gospel reading, 'get behind Satan!' (Matthew 4: 10). Instead, "while He was speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5). What an experience!

In last Sunday's Gospel again, we heard Jesus alone in the desert, tempted by the Devil. He remained focused on His mission on earth, quoting the Old Testament to the Devil. Whether Jesus isolated Himself and went to the wilderness or was accompanied by His friends on the mountaintop, one thing we can infer is that Jesus had a message for Peter, James, and John.

In the First reading from Genesis 12:1-4a, the word "bless" or "blessing" are used five times. Why? This is telling us something more, not just about the call of Abram by God but also the reward that follows those who are faithful, whether one is advanced in age or childless. We hear the same blessing in the second reading; St Paul reminds Timothy of the blessings God bestows on us through Christ Jesus (2 Tim 1:8b – 10).

What is the importance of Transfiguration to us today, especially this Lenten Season? It is to offer us a glimpse of the glory of the Resurrection. And that after the cross or suffering is glory. That is to say, there is no Easter without Good Friday. The sin that has disfigured the original design of things of our Creator, we need all the graces to remain steadfast for the blessings to come.

The story of Jesus' baptism, the Transfiguration is an epiphany story. Both stories are manifestations of Jesus as He is, or as He will be. In both epiphanies - there is a voice confirming and calling us to be 'listen to Him.' On the mountain where everything took place is also a place of divine manifestation, it is also a place of prayer for Jesus to commune with His Father, while the cloud is a sign of the presence of God. Moses and Elijah stand for the Law and the Prophets. It is no longer possible to say what happened on the mountain, whether it was a vision or a profound religious experience on the hill. There is one essential point to accept, and that is to see the Transfiguration story only was a stage in the education of the apostles. Can our faith transform us into someone new and faithful?

In the First Reading from the Book of Genesis 12:14, we see that the unquestionable obedience of Abraham, unlike that of Adam and Eve last Sunday. His obedience will bring blessings to many of his descendants. It points to the fact of Jesus' willingness in the New Testament, how He is prepared to accept even death on a cross for humanity.

"Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God." (2 Timothy 1:8b - 10) This statement about suffering from St Paul addressing Timothy also applies to Abram in his call by God. Like St. Ignatius says, "If God sends you many sufferings; it is a sign that He has great plans for you and certainly wants to make you a saint." Abram's call was to leave his comfort zone, his familiar, prosperous, and secure environment to where the Lord God had sent him. His belief in God's promise of blessing and his obedience, even in the face of unimaginable testing and suffering, present him as a model of faith for us today. It makes me remember the beautiful words of St Teresa, "Without our suffering, our work would be social work, excellent and helpful, but it would not be the work of Jesus Christ, not part of the Redemption. All the desolation of the poor people, not only their material poverty but also their spiritual destitution, must be redeemed. And we must share it, for only by being one with them can we redeem them by bringing God into their lives and bringing them to God."

Sometimes, God allows us to suffer, not just for ourselves but to understand others. St Paul, on the other hand, a father, a rabbi, teacher, and guide to Timothy, knew why he was encouraging Timothy, his dear child, to pay attention as his disciple that he had to endure suffering for the Gospel. Though pain will come, Paul assures Timothy that God provides the strength to live in fidelity to the Gospel, for holiness is perseverance in suffering. St Francis of Assisi says, "No one ought to consider himself a true servant of God who is not tried by many trials."

Stewardship

*Tithing - God's Plan for Giving on Sunday, 3/1/2020 our Offering was \$ 4,043.00

.. Today's second collection is for the Support of Catholic Relief Services Collection.

.. Next week second collection is for the Easter Flowers Offering.

Tax Statement

Anyone that needs their donation statement for Tax purpose are to stop by the Rectory Office and leave your name and envelope number and we will mail it out to you.

GUIDELINE FOR LENTEN OBSERVANCE

FASTING binds all persons who have completed their 18th birthday through those who have completed their 59th year, unless prevented by poor health. On days of fast, one full meal is allowed. Two other meals sufficient to maintain strength may be taken according to one's own needs. Eating meals in between is not allowed although fluid may be taken. (Canon 1252)

ABSTINENCE binds all persons who have completed their 14th birthday, unless prevented by poor health. On days of abstinence during Lent, the consumption of meat of mammals or fowl is not allowed. The Church strongly encourages the observance of Friday abstinence throughout the year, but failure to do so is not regarded as sinful. (Canon 1252)

Prayer Ideas: Read from the Bible each day, pray for someone new from the church/school/work each day. Attend Mass at least once during the week other than Sunday.

Fasting Ideas: Give up a certain/food/drink/ or candy that you love, or give up the computer or TV one day per week, stop eating meals out, give up an activity that wastes your time.

Alms giving/Service Ideas: Volunteer for a local organization, nursing home or hospital.

~ Stations of the Cross ~

· Friday after 12:05pm Mass - Stations of the Cross in English

· Friday at 6:45pm - Stations of the Cross in Arabic

· Friday of 8:00pm - Stations of the Cross in Spanish in our Church. You are all invited!

Sundays Readings:

First Reading: Genesis 12: 1-4a (25a)p. 45

Abraham was commanded by the Lord to leave his home to go to a new land. There the Lord God would make of him a great nation, and all would be blessed because of him.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 33: 4-5, 18-19, 20, 22 p. 46 Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1: 8b-10 p. 46 God saves all people and calls them to a holy life, not because of their own merit but because of the grace held out in Christ. Christ "destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Gospel: Matthew 17: 1-9 p. 47 Jesus went up to a high mountain. With Moses and Elijah at his side, he was transfigured before the eyes of his disciples Peter, James and John. A voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." resisted temptation and remained faithful to the Lord God. When the devil left, angels came and ministered to Jesus.

Religious Education

March 2020

3/14/20-Religious Education Classes Children in grades 3—6 will be doing their Reconciliation at 9:30 am.

3/21/20-Religious Education Classes

3/28/20-Religious Education Classes

Parents please remind your children to bring their pink signing sheet to Mass for the priest to sign.

Have them study their Prayers.

Cardinal's Annual Stewardship Appeal

Update of 2020 Appeal Goals Goal: \$37,500 Pledged: \$ 9,853.00

Paid: \$9,603.00 Participants: 16 Ave. Gift: \$9,853.00

Thank you so much for your cooperation again towards Cardinal's Appeal. Please, we are still in need of more support in order to reach our parish goal for 2020 as we have been doing.

Lenten Season is a good time to consider giving towards Cardinal's Appeal.

To donate you can go to cardinalsappeal.org, click on Donate, select an amount, and direct your gift to our Church:

#567 Immaculate Conception, Yonkers

Mass Intentions for the week of March 7 to March 15, 2020

Saturday, March 7, 2020:

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

5:00 pm - Available/Disponibile

7:30pm - Legion De Maria * Laura López

Sunday, March 8, 2020:

7:30 am - For the Parishioner/ Por los Parroquianos

9:00 am - Felipe Reales + * De Su Esposa y Familia

11:00 am - Anna Mikulsky + * Mr. & Mrs. Michael Martin

Monday, March 9, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Frank Navarro + * Carmen Navarro

Tuesday March 10, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

Wednesday, March 11, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

Thursday, March 12, 2020

8:15am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Carmen Celi + * Livia Torres

7:00 pm - Ofelia Pérez + * Miguel Lucas

Friday, March 13, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Shoshana Gewargis + * Denis Gewargis

Saturday, March 14, 2020:

12:05 pm - Clarence & Ada Irma Mirach + * Sister Nancy Mirach

5:00 pm - Eliseo Lugo Jr. + * Marta Gonzales & Family

7:30pm - Hector Jose Marmolejos + * Familia Marmolejos

Sunday, March 15, 2020:

7:30 am - For the Parishioner/ Por los Parroquianos

9:00 am - Bartolina Frias & Ramon Serrano + * Eladio Serrano

11:00 am - Available/Disponibile

+Indicates deceased *Indicates the person (s) who requested the Mass.