

## **Fr. Jins' Homily for the Second Sunday of Lent**

Matthew 17:1-9

The common theme of today's readings is metamorphosis or transformation. The readings invite us to work with the Holy Spirit to transform our lives by renewing them during Lent, and to radiate the grace of the transfigured Lord to all around us by our Spirit-filled lives. The Transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain reminds us that the way of the cross leads to Resurrection and eternal life, and that the purpose of Lent is to help us better to enter into those mysteries.

The word transfiguration means a change in form or appearance. Biologists call it metamorphosis (derived from the Greek word *metamorphoōmai* used in Matthew's Gospel), to describe the change that occurs when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. (Holo-metabolism, also called complete metamorphosis, is a form of insect development which includes four life stages – as an embryo or egg, a larva, a pupa and an imago or adult). As children, we might have curiously watched the process of the caterpillar turning into a chrysalis and then bursting into a beautiful Monarch butterfly. Fr. Anthony De Mello tells the story of such a metamorphosis in the prayer life of an old man. "I was a revolutionary when I was young, and all my prayer to God was: 'Lord, give me the grace to change the world.' As I approached middle age and realized that half of my life was gone without changing a single soul, I changed my prayer to: 'Lord, give me the grace to change all those who come in contact with me; just my family and friends and I shall be satisfied.' Now that I am old and my days are numbered, I have begun to see how foolish I have been. My one prayer now is: 'Lord, give me the grace to change myself.' If I had prayed for this right from the start, I should not have wasted my life."

Both the first and second readings present salvation history as a response to God's call, a call going out to a series of key persons beginning with Abraham and culminating with Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Faith is presented here as the obedient, trusting response to the call of God which opens up channels for the redemptive action of God in history, thus transforming the world. In answering this call, both Abram and Saul broke with the experiences of their past lives and moved into an unmapped future to become new "people of the Promise," for a new life. The first reading presents the change or transformation of the patriarch Abram from a childless pagan tribesman into a man of Faith in the One God. This, years later, leads to God's transforming his name from Abram to Abraham, and making him, as promised, the father of God's chosen people, Israel. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 33) Response, Lord, let Your Mercy be on us, as we place our trust in You," reminds us that we must trust in the Lord "Who is our Help and our Shield," for, "Upright is the Word of the Lord, and all His works are trustworthy." The second reading, taken from St. Paul's second letter to Timothy, explains the type of Lenten life-transformation expected of us. Today's Gospel describes Jesus' Transfiguration during prayer on a mountain.

At the shortage of wine during the wedding of Cana, Jesus changed water into wine: one substance became another substance, and the appearances changed. In each Holy Mass our offering of bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus under the unchanged appearances of bread and wine. Hence, just as Jesus' Transfiguration strengthened the Apostles in their time of trial, each Holy Mass should be our source of Heavenly strength against our own temptations and our source for the renewal of our lives during Lent. In addition, communion with Jesus in prayer and in the Eucharist, should be a source of daily transformation for both our minds and hearts. We must also be transformed by becoming humbler and more selfless, sharing love, compassion, and forgiveness with others. But in our everyday lives, we often fail to recognize Jesus when he appears to us "transfigured," hidden in someone who is in some kind of need. Jesus will be happy when we attend to the needs of that

person. With the eyes of Faith, we must see Jesus in every one of our brothers and sisters, the children of God we come across each day, and, by His grace, respond to Jesus in each of them, with love and service.

Dear brothers and sisters, each Sacrament that we receive transforms us. Baptism transforms us into sons and daughters of God and heirs of heaven. Confirmation makes us the temples of the Holy Spirit. By the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God brings back the sinner to the path of holiness. By receiving in Faith, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, we are spiritually, and, if God wills, physically, healed and our sins are forgiven. And so it is with Marriage, and most particularly with our reception of Jesus Himself, in the Eucharist and with Holy Orders in which a man becomes a Priest, an alter Christus, who with the Power of the Holy Spirit, offers the Sacrifice of the Mass and serves as a Shepherd of Jesus' sheep.

In moments of doubt and during feelings of despair, the expectation of our transformation in Heaven helps us to reach out to God and listen to His consoling words: "This is my beloved son/daughter in whom I am well pleased."

Dear brothers and sisters, we need these 'mountain-top' experiences in our own lives. We can share experiences like those of Peter, James, and John when we spend some extra time with Jesus in prayer during Lent. Perhaps we may want to fast for one day, taking only water, thus releasing spiritual energy, which in turn, can lift our thoughts to a higher plane. Such a fast may also help us to remember the starving millions in the world and make us more willing to help them.