

## Second Sunday in Lent

The clergy sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church has affected other countries besides ours. Australia reported recently that a court found Cardinal George Pell guilty of sex crimes. His appeal has been set for early June. In context the news was more disturbing because the scandal unfolded differently there than here. In Australia, the government's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse investigated all the Catholic dioceses at once. The devastating report came out a year and a half ago. One bishop described it this way: At least all the lights came on at once. In the United States a slow, continual rollout of revelations takes a longer toll on Catholics. Painful as it is to look at sin, it is sometimes better to get the whole picture at once, so you know the gravity of the situation and the size of the task before you.

At the transfiguration of Jesus all the lights came on at once for Peter, John and James. Even when a cloud overshadowed them, they heard the Father's voice, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." They saw Jesus' glory as "his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white." But the gravity of the situation they now faced frightened them.

The transfiguration of Jesus resembles his baptism. In both cases a voice proclaims, "This is my Son; listen to him." Right after the baptism the devil tempted Jesus; right after the transfiguration the apostles encountered a man possessed by a demon. Moses and Elijah each had met God on a mountain, and each had named successors. Now Jesus was on a mountain, with his three main successors in tow. Several gospels report the transfiguration, but only Luke says that Moses and Elijah spoke of Jesus' "exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem." An exodus is what Moses endured - a long trek in the desert to bring his people into the promised land. Now Jesus was facing an exodus that the apostles could not comprehend. But the word implied considerable suffering before attaining glory. In one moment, the lights had come on.

Lent aims to throw the light on for you. In this time of repentance the Church invites each of us to examine the dark corners of our lives, to part the curtains and let the light of Christ flood the room. It can be frightening to look at what he expects and what we actually do. Consider just the events of this day. Was there something you said or did that leaves you a little embarrassed? Did you not help someone whom God may have put in your path? Why not? Was it to protect your image? Did you cause someone to suffer the pain of solitude or frustration? Sin can run deep. It often feels demonic. Some people insufficiently address their addictions to alcohol, drugs, pornography or abuse. It is hard to change behavior that has been years in the making or years in the hiding.

As part of our diocesan holy year of renewal, parishes are increasing the opportunities for Catholics to go to confession this Lent. We are leaving the light on more generously so that those who wish to confess their sins may see the glory of Christ. Luke's account of the transfiguration begins when Jesus went up the mountain to pray, and it ends when the apostles "fell silent." If we take the time for silence and prayer, we too can encounter the light of Christ. It may be frightening to see what he intends to reveal and the temptations that persist, but we can walk our own personal exodus from sin into the promised land of grace.

**Sunday, March 17, 2019**