

I'm tired of winter. So is everyone else I talk to. And we're all tired of talking about how tired we are of winter. You can put on extra clothing, but then there's more laundry to do. You can decide not to shovel the walks, but then you track dirt into your house. You can turn up the heat, but then you have more bills to pay. You can go someplace else that's warmer, but then you're not home. I don't know which we'll be happier to see this year: the end of Lent or the end of winter.

But this is one reason that Lent falls in this time of year. It reminds us how weak we are through sin, and how graced we are by redemption. It also shows how frail we are in winter, and how grateful we are for spring. Sometimes February gives you a few days of respite, days when the sun shines, the snow has melted, and you can smell spring in the air. We haven't had those days this year, but we yearn for them as a sign of hope that the harsh winter will someday pass.

The transfiguration of Jesus worked the same wonder in his life. He had told his disciples about the resurrection, but they weren't getting it yet. So one day, out of the blue, he takes Peter, John and James with him up a mountain, and his appearance transfigures before their eyes. The apostles catch a blinding glimpse of the glory that is to come. It stirs their faith, and it gives them strength to face hardship.

The Second Letter to Timothy speaks about the appearance of Jesus. Even though it does not specifically refer to the transfiguration, this text is our second reading today because it carries the same message. Paul says that God's design bestowed grace on us before time began, and that grace was made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus. It was singularly manifest on the mount of the transfiguration, but it was manifest wherever Jesus went, whatever he did and whatever he said. His appearance revealed the ancient grace of God. Paul is therefore able to say to Timothy, "Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God."

We all have our share of hardship in the gospel. Winter weather is hard on our bodies and our spirits. It makes us more irritable. It demands a more conscientious approach to charity. We don't always feel like helping other people in weather like this. But at times like this we need one another all the more.

The transfiguration is a sign of things to come. It is the assurance that Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. On mornings like this, our needs are simpler. We just wish he'd bring us a few warm days. They will come, and they will transfigure the earth. When Jesus comes again, he will transfigure us on that great Easter day when we will rise to be with him in glory.