

## 2nd Sunday of Lent

**My arm is still a little sore from my first vaccine shot this week. I hadn't envisioned this, but I feel excited to help the movement from the darkness of this pandemic into light. Over half a million people have died, causing untold grief this past year. The number of infections is decreasing. I still hear about friends getting the virus, though not as many as I did even a month ago. We aren't yet at the end, but we're seeing a vision of transfigured life after this time of exile.**

**The transfiguration of Jesus, in a very different historical moment and to a very different group of people, offered a similar message: Disciples saw a vision of heavenly life after this time of earthly exile.**

**In Mark's account, the inner circle—Peter, James and John—witness a change in Jesus' clothing. Other gospels tell of his transfigured face, but Mark describes the garments. They became white, dazzling white, beyond-bleached white. That's the color the angels wore at the empty tomb, the color the bible associates with the clothing of the Son of Man, and of those who populate heaven with him. In our sacraments, the newly baptized receive a white garment, the uniform of heaven. Sackcloth signifies repentance; white cloth signifies glory.**

**In the vision, Elijah and Moses appear. All of them had fasted 40 days: Moses on Mount Sinai, Elijah on the way to Mount Horeb, and Jesus in the desert. The three of them also shared something mysterious about the way their lives ended. The Book of Deuteronomy says Moses died before entering the Promised Land and was buried, but no one knows the place of his burial (34:6). This led to speculation that God had taken Moses's body directly into heaven, much the way we proclaim that Mary was assumed into heaven. Elijah was taken into heaven in a whirlwind, but the bible never plainly says he died. This led to speculation that Elijah would return one day, and Jesus himself called John the Baptist Elijah, the one who is to come (Matthew 11:14). The appearance of Moses and Elijah thus prepared the apostles for the mysterious news they were about to hear concerning the end of Jesus' life.**

**They see a cloud, a sign of divine presence. They hear a voice repeating the message from the baptism of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son." When the scene dissipates, Jesus instructs the apostles to tell no one about it until—at the mysterious end of his life—he rises from the dead. The transfiguration revealed that God is present, that Jesus is his Son, and that death gives way to glory.**

**This pandemic has exiled us from our friends and common life. Many of us have lost someone we loved; many more have suffered ill health. All of us pass this Lent in exile from any kind of glory: We confess that we sin and seek forgiveness. We fast, pray and give alms. We listen to the beloved Son as the Father commanded us. Today's gospel about light, proclaimed under a full moon this weekend, anticipates the message of Easter coming at the next full moon. We are anxious to reach the promises at the end of Lent, at the end of the pandemic, and at the end of life. In our exile we offer our hearts, hands and sore arms until the day we await, when Christ the beloved Son of God, risen from the dead, flings wide the gates of heaven and invites us in, transfigured. If we listen to him now, we will end our exile of sin and share his glory.**