

# SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

February 27, 1994

Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

Romans 8:31-34

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Mark 9:2-10

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the things, or who are the people, that you value the most? What would it take for you to give them up?
2. Would that be like or unlike Abraham's experience?
3. What blessings have come into your life because of trials?
4. How do the major trials in our world today challenge us?

# 'This is my Son, the Beloved'

## THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN  
EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner



"IT'S SUPPOSED TO look like this when you're done."

"This" may be the picture on the envelope of the sewing pattern, the cover of the jigsaw puzzle, or the assembly instructions for shelves. Manufacturers tease us with a picture to show us how beautiful whatever we bought is going to look. Invariably, we never realize how much work it's going to be to get to the finished product. But, whenever we get discouraged we can look back at that picture, get inspired; and retool our work until one day it really does look like it's supposed to look when it's done.

The transfiguration is that kind of a picture. In it we see an image of Easter. The Church gives us this picture near the beginning of Lent, so we know what the finished product will look like when we get to the end.

Each year the Second Sunday of Lent brings us this story. This year we hear Mark's version, probably the oldest. The visionary nature of the story makes it sound like an episode from after the Resurrection.

MARK RECOUNTS the incident in his typically brief style: Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain. He himself is transformed, and even his cloths turn white. Elijah and Moses appear to speak with him. Peter, terrified, offers to build some tents for them. An overhanging cloud lets loose a voice which says "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Then they look up and see only Jesus.

We don't know which mountain this was, but since Mark describes it as a place apart, many commentators assume it's Mount Tabor. Tabor rises seemingly out of nowhere, looking like some pregnant belly arcing up, as if the earth itself were lying prone ready to give birth. It invites the impression that God would surely do business here.

The three disciples whom Jesus leads there have accompanied him on other missions in Mark: Among the first to follow Jesus (1:16-20), they watched the cure of Peter's mother-in-law (1:29), the raising of Jairus' daughter (5:37), and would later escort him to Gethsemane (14:33). Their presence typically

signals an important moment in Jesus's ministry.

The appearance of Elijah and Moses adds to the solemnity of this occasion. Many people assume they represent the law and the prophets, two great subdivisions of the Old Testament. Jesus then would symbolize the one toward whom these scriptures point.

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS are possible. Both Moses and Elijah were taken to heaven at the end of their lives. Moses' burial place remains unknown (Dt 34:6), and Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kgs 2:11). Both were expected to return again, too (Mal 3:23-24 or 4:5-6, and Dt 18:15). Peter must have suspected something was up; he volunteered to erect three tents, as if the three of them had come to stay. Perhaps he was expecting the end of the world.

The appearance of Elijah reminds us of John the Baptist's role. Mark is about to indicate that John fulfills Elijah's role (9:13) John, the forerunner of Jesus, has already prophesied by imprisonment and death that Jesus will face fatal suffering at the hands of his enemies. So the appearance of Elijah sobers the careful reader of the Gospel.

The conversation which follows the apparitions concerns what rising from the dead might mean. You could call that conversation the first Lent -- a discussion and introspection about death and rising.

The voice which comes from the cloud answers the main questions which drives Mark's Gospel, "Who is Jesus?" It says, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" The cloud reminds us of the cloud which led Israel's Exodus from Egypt (Ex 16:70, 19:9, etc.) There they found the glory of the Lord. And the voice reminds us of the voice which boomed from the heavens at the Baptism of Jesus -- "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11), and the voice of Peter which has just proclaimed the truth of Jesus' identity -- "You are the Messiah" (Mk 8:29).

Still, in spite of the voice, the disciples hear, but do not understand. They still face the question about what rising from the dead means.

AT A DISTANCE of 2,000 years, the signs accompanying the transfiguration reveal truths which seem oblivious to us: glory, eternity, resurrection, and the victory over suffering. Perhaps there are signs around us whose meaning future generations will think are obvious.

Where do you see the glory of Christ revealed in your family? In your parish? In our country?

Where do you find your image of Christ, a picture you can turn to that encourages you when you feel at a loss?

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## Daily Scripture Readings

### First Sunday of Lent

Sunday, February 20

Genesis 9:8-15  
Psalms 25:4-9  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:12-15

### Monday, February 21

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18  
Psalms 19:8-10, 15  
Matthew 25:31-46

### Tuesday, February 22

1 Peter 5:1-4  
Psalms 23:1-6  
Matthew 16:13-19

### Wednesday, February 23

Jonah 3:1-10  
Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19  
Luke 11:29-32

### Thursday, February 24

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25  
Psalms 138:1-3, 7-8  
Matthew 7:7-12

### Friday, February 25

Ezra 10:21-28  
Psalms 130:1-8  
Matthew 5:20-26



### Saturday, February 26

Deuteronomy 26:16-19  
Psalms 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8  
Matthew 5:43-48

### Second Sunday of Lent

Sunday, February 27

Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18  
Psalms 116:10, 15-19  
Romans 8:31-34  
Mark 9:2-10