

The athletes at the Olympics come from different nations, but they all have one thing in common. They glow. Their faces glow with good health, youth and enthusiasm. They are amateurs, but they appear like gods and goddesses descended from Mount Olympus to entertain us mortals who get most of our exercise by walking from table to television to bed.

Pregnant women have a glow about them. Women who want a glowing face apply makeup and hair color. Some men do the same. If we do not have a natural glow we can create the illusion that we do.

In the transfiguration, Jesus revealed his glow to the inner circle of disciples. Peter, James and John go up a high mountain with him, like Mount Olympus, and they witness a change to his face. They see in a moment the glory they will one day see forever. This gospel comes near the beginning of Lent as a sign of where Lent will end. Jesus will endure suffering, but it will end in glory. We do penance during this season, but it will end in the joy of Easter.

In the transfiguration, Jesus appears with Moses and Elijah, who probably represent the Law and the Prophets, that is the great books of the Old Testament. And as individuals Moses and Elijah each fasted for forty days and were taken up into glory. They are signs of a good Lent. During Lent we get a glimpse of glory. We depend less on food and material things. We are more considerate of our neighbor. We are more comfortable at prayer.

Throughout these forty days we reach an interior transfiguration. We admit our sin and purify ourselves through penance. While we are aware of our sins, Lent is the perfect time to confess them to God through the sacrament of reconciliation.

By the end of Lent we'll be able to forsake some of our old ways. We will recommit ourselves to Christ. All of Lent is guiding us toward the Easter Vigil, when we will greet Christ rising from the dead in the night. That night we will renew our baptismal promises in the glow of a new Easter candle. This Lent we die to our sins and rise recommitted to Christ this Easter.

But first we spend forty days in the desert. We train our spirits, as athletes train their bodies for the Olympics. We abstain from meat on Fridays. We do without some pleasures. We give more to those in need. We devote more time to prayer. A good Lent may not make our faces glow, but it will make our hearts glow, as we wait in joyful hope for the rising of our Savior, Jesus Christ.