

2nd SUNDAY OF LENT

St. Mark 9:2-10

At three times in His public ministry Our Lord stood on a mountain top. Each of those times was to give an important lesson. In His sermon on the mount, he spoke against the spirit of the world. On Mount Tabor at the Transfiguration, He showed forth the glory that was to be His after the crucifixion. And on Mount Calvary, He taught that the Holy Cross was the only means by which we can be redeemed.

On that mountain top of Tabor, Our Lord stood there with three of the Apostles: St. Peter, St. James and St. John. But why these three? St. Peter, because he was to be the first Pope and the one on whom Our Lord would found His Church. St. James, because he was to be the first Apostle martyred for the faith. St. John, because he was to behold the glory of the Apocalypse. But these three also needed to see the Transfiguration so that they would understand the truth of Our Lord and of His suffering. St. Peter had spoken against the Cross, whilst St. James and St. John had thought that the messiah would be one to bring earthly glory.

For us, too, we often fail to see what Our Lord suffered and why it matters. We come to Ash Wednesday and have ashes placed on our head as a sign of repentance and we come again on Good Friday and witness the adoration of the Holy Cross. But do we understand what it is that we are doing and what it is we are witnessing?

Tragically, many have tried to turn—and many of them successfully—to make our Faith—the one, true Faith—a pale imitation of what Christ gave to us and handed down to us through the Apostles. For many of us, our penances have become as little as possible because we are taught we should not place a burden on ourselves, our confessions become weak because we are taught we

should not blame ourselves, our hearing of the Mass has become part-time because we are taught that we don't have to worship God in a church. But while many have made as little as possible of what we owe to God, they have made as much as possible of what God owes to them. We question why does God allow me to suffer in this or that way, but we don't want God to intervene in our lives and upset our pleasure. We want God to heal us of our sickness, or find us a job, or punish our enemies, but we don't want God to stop us from the the immoral relationships we form, or from the sinful things we do to make our lives easier and which give us as much pleasure as possible.

Just as the Apostles had a false understanding of who Our Lord was, so do many of us. The Church, by the grace of God, gives us this holy season of Lent, these forty days to learn more of who Our Lord truly is and what His sacrifice on the Holy Cross truly means. In one way, Lent is a time to prepare to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ at Easter. In another way, Lent is a time to prepare to face God. It is a way to practice for our death and the judgement that is to come to all of us.

We hear of the Transfiguration and we see beautiful paintings and works of art that show the glory of that moment. But what we don't hear about and what we don't see is the long and dusty and tiresome trek up the side of that mountain: the heat of the day and the cold of the night, the thirst, the hunger, the dirt clinging to His skin, the stones digging into His feet. But there was no other way to get to the top of that mountain. But when He did, His glory shone forth.

We should see our own lives as a trek up that mountainside of Tabor. We want the glory of heaven but the only way there is to begin to follow Our Lord up that mountainside and deal with all the sufferings of our own lives. We must confront those sufferings, as much as we don't want to, because we must bear those things to make ourselves pure. It is as St. Peter would later write in his letter: "even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that

the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed” (I Pt. 1:6-7). What we suffer, whether it be imposed on us like sickness or poverty or injustice, or whether it be the penances we take up like prayer and fasting and almsgiving, are the weapons we have to fight the Devil, to fight the powers of Hell, and to strengthen our own resolve, our own determination, and to show God Himself that we want Him above everything else.

These things are not easy, they are not supposed to be, otherwise where would the glory and the triumph be? They are difficult because each of us has inherited a world mired in sin—the original sin of Adam and Eve—and though we may have received the grace of Baptism to remove that stain of sin, we, each of us, still carries the burden of concupiscence; that is, the desire to sin. We have been born into a cosmic battle between the armies of dark and the armies of light, between the forces of Satan and the graces of God, and Jesus Christ, Our Lord, is the one who goes before us in that battle, to wage war for us and to ransom our souls so that we can be bought back from the Devil and given back to God.

Make everything you can of this Lent, while you still can, and go up that mountainside of Tabor with Our Lord, so that one day you too may come to share in the glory that was won for us on that mountain of Calvary.