

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Lent A  
March 15-16, 2014

*Lord, it is good that we are here.*

Readings: Genesis 12:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Matthew 17:1-9

“Lord, it is good that we are here.” The sense of satisfaction that must have been in Peter’s voice is easy to imagine. The account of the Transfiguration is a powerful reminder of the joy that comes from being in the presence of the Lord. While conducting Confirmation Interviews this week, I was pleasantly surprised how many of the young people described some experiences of God’s presence, whether at a retreat before the Blessed Sacrament, or in this beautiful Church. It tells me that the thirst for the touch of God is real, sustained and very active in their lives.

In a world filled with a need for constant activity for our senses, it is quite difficult to get anyone to remain quiet for enough time to really hear the voice of God speak to them. Any bit of silence is covered over quickly. We priests can just as easily fall prey to this mindset, and slowly but surely lose sight of our need for silence.

The account of the Transfiguration, when looked at closely, reveals some important details. It is commonly believed that the mount of Transfiguration was that of modern Mount Tabor, located about 4 miles from Nazareth. Today, Mount Tabor takes about two hours to climb, with an elevation of 1,886 ft. I have only been there once and we made the ascent in a bus. I still recall the many switchbacks and the steep incline. A series of steps was built for pilgrims to this site back in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. They constructed 4,300 steps to the top, so imagine how difficult it must have been in the time of our Lord.

And yet, Peter noted that it is good to be here. I suspect he was happy the climb was over! Much more importantly, Peter was happy to be in the presence of the Lord. The three of them had several hours alone with Jesus as they ascended the Mount.

That must have been very quality time, memorable time, and precious time. What would we give for at least two hours with Jesus? And yet, we can have time with the Lord by means of our own prayer. Sure, some will say that this is not the same as walking and talking with him. While true to a point, the great saints teach us that union with Jesus in prayer can be very intimate and personal.

When we develop a personal relationship with Christ in prayer, the Lord is there at our waking and sleeping, behind and before us, all around us. We feel enveloped in His love and that allows us to withstand the challenges that of necessity come our way. “Bear your share of the hardship for the Gospel.” With this admonition, in our second reading Saint Paul reminded Timothy that part of being a disciple of necessity entails enduring hardships.

But he quickly follows that by adding that we ought to bear that hardship “with the strength that comes from God.” This adds something very important to the equation. But let’s face it- some hardships are much more difficult to bear than others. Not all hardships are on the same level- more importantly, not all people experience the same number of trials in their life.

On a human level, it is easy to say that this is not fair. Left at this level, it is a true statement. Why do some have to endure so much? And yet, in faith we believe that the Lord can and will sustain us in our struggles. And He will sustain us with the strength necessary to endure, but that weight is greatly reduced if we can help others to bear part of that weight, just as Simon of Cyrene did for Jesus. As we continue our Lenten journey, let us embrace this season. Lord, it is good that Lent is here, because in the end, we will have drawn closer to you.