

**February 28, 2021**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

**Gen 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18**

**Rom 8:31b-34**

**Mark 9:2-10**

Here we are on the Second Sunday of Lent, also commonly known as Transfiguration Sunday. This mystery of Transfiguration, taken as a single event in the life of Jesus, is seemingly difficult to understand. What's really going on here? And what does it mean for us today in our lives?

First we need to understand the sequence of events leading up to the Transfiguration. Scripture tells us that after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain believed by scholars to be Mt. Tabor (TAYbore) which is near the southwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Six days ago, this past Monday, the scene for the gospel was the wilderness area near Caesarea-Philippi, located to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee. It would take about six days to walk from Caesarea-Philippi to Mt Tabor.

It was at Caesarea-Philippi where Peter, in the company of the disciples, made his great confession to Jesus expressing his faith that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Having heard Peter loud and clear, Jesus makes His own confession to the disciples during the walk from Caesarea-Philippi to Mt Tabor. Jesus tells them that He will suffer greatly and be rejected and killed by the Jewish religious authorities, and that He will rise after three days. Well, Peter misses "the rise" part and protests that such a thing must never happen. Peter is focused on the societal glory and honor that will inevitably come to him as a close associate of the Messiah. He has no clue that glory and honor may not

come from this world. He also has no clue that glory and honor are usually achieved through great sacrifice, pain, and suffering.

When they reach Mt Tabor, Jesus doesn't invite all the disciples to accompany Him up the mountain. He invites only Peter, James, and John. Why only these three you may wonder. Who can know the mind of Jesus? But what we do know is that Peter is the chosen leader of the disciples and later will be the leader of the early Church. James will be the first of the apostles to be martyred. John will be the only apostle with enough courage to stay with Jesus through His crucifixion. Perhaps they will need to draw upon this moment of encounter later on.

When they reach the top of the mountain the full glory of Jesus as the Son of God is revealed to them. Peter is exposed to glory and honor beyond human understanding. Moses and Elijah also appear, men who were popularly believed to have been saved from death and to be forever alive in the presence of God. For Peter, this is why he joined up with Jesus. His ambitions are fulfilled, such that he doesn't want the moment to end. He wants to pitch tents and remain forever.

Many scholars believe that Peter was just babbling about tents out of fear. I wonder if there is another explanation.

Have you ever had an experience that you wished would never end? I remember vividly a baseball game my father took me to when I was a boy. It wasn't my first game, but it was the first after I had begun playing ball myself and so I had begun to understand a bit about the game.

The Philadelphia Phillies was playing the Milwaukee Braves, so I guess I'm dating myself here. There were few hall of famers on the field that day, including the two starting pitchers: Robin Roberts of the

Phillies and Warren Spahn of the Braves. It was a spectacular spring day: Bright sunshine and warm, but not hot, temperatures. The oppressive humidity of summer had not yet arrived. The spring-green grass of the field glowed in the sunshine, dazzling both eye and imagination. It was a well-played game, and my Dad taught me a lot about baseball that day. Best of all, it was just me and my Dad. I never wanted that day to end. But, of course, it did.

I think that's how Peter felt that day on the summit of Mt Tabor. He never wanted this moment with the true Jesus—the human and the divine—to end. But, of course, it did, right after God the Father told the disciples to listen to His Son.

What was God telling Peter, James, and John to listen to? I think He was telling them to listen to Jesus' teaching that suffering is part of discipleship; that glory and honor are not benevolently bestowed gifts. Rather, glory and honor are the result of staying the course, completing the mission. For before there will be any more glory and honor, Jesus and His disciples will be faced with climbing another mountain—a mountain by the name of Calvary. It will not be so easy to recognize the voice of God on that mountain.

I believe that our great God provides us all with Mt Tabor moments so that we can cope with the Calvary's in life. The trouble we humans have is that while we can easily recognize the Calvarys, we're not always so adept at recognizing the Tabor moments.

For example, this past year has been an easily recognized Calvary. But if you think about it and pray about it, God has also given us Tabor moments—moments meant to sustain us through the anguish of Calvary, perhaps even spur us into becoming better disciples; better stewards by transfiguring our hearts.

When I look back upon this past year, I see some Tabor moments:

- A quieter world providing us silent time, reflection time, prayer time. What did each of you hear in the silence? More importantly, what did you experience in the silence?

- Healthcare and other essential workers meeting our basic needs at sometimes great personal risk and doing it with a smile.
- Communities coming together to take care of those most severely affected by the pandemic.
- Vaccines developed in record time and injected into arms with love and compassion, often by unpaid volunteers. Have you stopped to think about all the researchers and lab workers and logistics people who worked countless overtime hours away from their families to save the lives of those they will never know?
- We had 2 Tabor moments last week right here in this parish: Two men ordained deacons and the blessing of a new parish hall. Only the presence of God can accomplish such things amidst the Calvary of a pandemic.

As we continue our celebration today, let us pray for the grace to recognize the presence of God in the Tabor moments of our lives, particularly the times when we seem to be climbing Calvary. May we use these Tabor moments to pray for the faith of Peter, the courage of James, and the compassionate love of John, so that one day, like Moses and Elijah, we may come to that everlasting Tabor in the presence of God won so lovingly for us by Jesus on Calvary. I'm thinking it will be like a day at the ballpark with Dad, only this time the day will never end.