



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Lent
March 17, 2019

Accepting Jesus' Challenge

By Mary Katharine Deeley

From the top of Mount Tabor in Israel, the supposed site of Jesus' transfiguration, visitors can see clearly across the valley to the distant Golan Heights. The view takes your breath away. When I was in the valley, I could only see the immediate area, but at the top both the distance and the beauty of the land mesmerized me.

Maybe that's why mountains have always been places of prayer, of divine unveiling, and why Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to the top of a mountain to experience this vision of his glory. He wanted them to see more than

their daily life and work. He wanted them to see further than they ever thought they could. He wanted them to see the depths of who he was in a new and profound way. It was important that they do this. The transfiguration happens in the midst of Jesus' predictions of his passion and death, before he begins his deliberate journey to Jerusalem. Without an image of the glorified Christ, the apostles might not have had the courage to continue following him.

Like the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, we hear this transfiguration account every Lent. Jesus takes the Church, and each one of us, up the mountain and dares us to see further, better, more deeply than ever before. Through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, he dares us to leave what we know, listen to him, and follow in his footsteps. May we have the courage to accept the challenge. +

Sunday Readings

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so, [God] added, will your descendants be.

**Philippians 3:17-4:1 or
Philippians 3:20-4:1**

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 9:28b-36

While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.

During Lent, Jesus takes each of us up the mountain, daring us to see further than ever before.

A Word from Pope Francis

At the end of the stunning experience of the transfiguration, the disciples came down the mountain with eyes and hearts transfigured by their encounter with the Lord. It is the journey that we too can make....Transformed by Christ's presence...we will be a concrete sign of the invigorating love of God.

—Angelus,
August 6, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How can I use the Lenten season to transfigure my life and grow closer to God?
- Do I have the courage to change bad habits so as to follow more closely in Jesus' footsteps?



Are We There Yet?

By Kathryn Begnaud

We've taken umpteen road trips with our five boys when they were young. The question most heard on those trips is the title of this article. They just wanted to get there.

That sentiment best describes my attitude toward Lent; my eagerness to jump ahead to Holy Week often results in wearing blinders for six weeks as my eyes constantly search over the next hill for Jerusalem. I'm resistant to the wearing of purple and often want to eat dessert first.

On the Road

I imagine Jesus and his followers drawing nearer to Jerusalem—taking turns walking next to him, getting better acquainted, reminiscing, and sharing food. I suspect that, as they lifted their eyes when crossing each hilltop, some pointed to the horizon: “I see Jerusalem, our destiny!”

As they approached the city, they were undoubtedly filled with anticipation. Was there also foreboding? Did they ask plaintively, “Are we there yet?” When some complained of exhaustion, did Jesus place his hand upon their backs and whisper, “I will give you rest. Trust me. I have called you and I love you?”

I heard those very words whispered

to my battered soul when I first “visited Jerusalem”—a trip taken to deal with my father's alcoholism, but one that, instead, taught me all of life is Lenten. For months I prepared for the “journey” by planning a family intervention. I drew near through prayer, by reading about alcoholism, and by talking with experts I believed knew the only fail-proof route.

I fantasized that my experience would mirror others' success. There's the rub! Expecting to encounter God precisely as others have is a trap. We must each walk the journey with our own feet.

Haven't there been times in our lives that we've listened so intently to others' experiences of God that we've become disappointed in our own? Have we allowed the joyful stories of others to become a condition by which we measure the validity of God's presence? Though we are communal, we also walk individually with Jesus. While side-by-side, we are all still approaching, still drawing near.

Broken and Mended

My own family intervention was a disaster, partly because I had so closely studied others' tales of Jerusalem that, confident of the route, I raced ahead of Jesus. My family hadn't the chance yet to draw near. They hadn't even known there was a map. They were being yanked through the city gates, and I was doing the yanking, not God.

At the time, I turned to Jesus and said, “If I'd known it would be this painful, I wouldn't have followed you here.” Many times I wanted to turn back, but I couldn't remember the return path. I couldn't unsee what I had seen. I couldn't unlearn new wisdom.

Exhausted, I decided to start over and, instead of hurling blame on my poor father, I began loving him—pure love: nothing more, nothing less. In short, I followed Jesus. I secretly reasoned that things couldn't get much worse anyway, and even with that attitude, the Lord still took me along.

Drawing Near

It has been nearly thirty years since my first true Lenten experience, and today my family is healthy and whole. My father, whose sobriety is regarded as a gift, has become our spiritual leader.

Drawing near to Lent is always a journey of truth, and the truth is always about us. It's the most grueling journey of our lifetimes, but it's also the most exhilarating. My only advice is to enter in. Draw near. God is calling. +



Lord, you desire to be with me and walk with me along life's journey. Awaken in my heart a desire and commitment to be with you in prayer.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 18-23

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 9:4b–10 / Lk 6:36–38

Tuesday, St. Joseph: 2 Sm 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16 / Rom 4:13, 16–18, 22 / Mt 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Lk 2:41–51a

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 18:18–20 / Mt 20:17–28

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 17:5–10 / Lk 16:19–31

Friday, Lenten Weekday: Gn 37:3–4, 12–13a, 7b–28a / Mt 21:33–43, 45–46

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Mi 7:14–15, 18–20 / Lk 15:1–3, 11–32