

Second Sunday of Lent



Transform Us

God, our life-giving Creator,
you who draw the first green shoots
from the frozen earth,
you who warm the springtime
sleeping in the winter,
look on us, your children,
who are sometimes frozen
in deadly ruts,
sometimes far from the dream you
have for us.

You showed Peter, James, and John
the dazzling face of Christ.
Inspire us as you did them.
Transform us into the brilliant image
of your Son Jesus,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, February 24, 2013
Becoming

Today's Readings: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27:2, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14 (1); Philippians 3:17-4:1 or 3:20-4:1; Luke 9:28b-36. It's often helpful to have signposts in unfamiliar territory. Every traveler knows the joy of seeing the airport symbol from the highway or finding a clearly marked road after a murky passage of feeling lost.

For Christians, Jesus is the ultimate sign and sacrament. Last week, he showed us how to handle temptation. This week he points to our final goal: transformation into the glory of our Father and Creator. If we've wandered lost or confused, he restores our direction: "Look, you were made for this brilliant light!" He reminds us that no matter how much we struggle or suffer, we are still God's beloved children. To our Father, we are as dazzling as Jesus on the mountaintop was to Peter, James, and John.

We've all experienced moments when our limited powers and responses grow larger, more generous than usual: when we suspend our usual watch-glancing to listen to a hurting friend; when we open our wallets to someone needier than we; when we understand a concept that has eluded us before; when we surprise even ourselves by stepping away from a life-draining habit. Those seeds are already there in us. Magnified, they will become the great dream God had for us at our conception. Gradually, we become kinder, stronger, more forgiving, and more convinced that we are God's beloved. During this season, ice crystals melt into spring's green blades. And we understand better that Lent is all about *becoming*.



This Week at Home

Monday, February 25

Giving Up Judgment

Those attempting to follow this Gospel for just one day may discover how quickly they jump to judgment. Not knowing all the facts, we criticize too easily. Who knows what disappointed child hides behind the surly teenage façade? Who knows what tragic losses color the older person's glum mood? Who knows what untold hurts led to the alcoholism? Does that crotchety person have a raging headache? Memorize the verse of this Gospel that most appeals. Then try not judging—and open your lap for an overflowing measure of good! Today's Readings: Daniel 9:4b–10; Psalm 79:8, 9, 11 and 13 (see 103:10a); Luke 6:36–38.

Tuesday, February 26

Laying Burdens—or Lightening Them?

It's tempting to sneer at the religious leaders Jesus so harshly describes in today's Gospel. But then we remember how often we've increased others' burdens, or set ourselves up as the authorities. To offset that tendency, do a humble practice: serve in a soup kitchen, visit a retirement center or a homebound neighbor, put together a sack of groceries for the soup kitchen, help your child with homework, assist with household chores, and *stop grumbling*. Today's Readings: Isaiah 1:10, 16–20; Psalm 50:8–9, 16bc–17, 21 and 23 (23b); Matthew 23:1–12.

Wednesday, February 27

The Hard Realities

Today's Gospel shows dramatically different hopes for the Messiah: on one hand, Jesus foretells the sad reality of mocking, flogging, and Crucifixion. On the other hand, the mother of James and John seeks thrones in the kingdom for her boys. She expresses the prevailing assumption that the Messiah would defeat the Roman occupiers and establish a triumphant reign. Another contrast: Jerusalem was the sacred center of Jewish religion, the site of the revered Temple. But it is also the place of Jesus's Death. How many of us turn to our faith

for exaltation, or comfort? Today's Readings: Jeremiah 18:18–20; Psalm 31:5–6, 14, 15–16 (17b); Matthew 20:17–28.

Thursday, February 28

Who's at the Gate?

The Gospel impels us to increase our practice of direct service or advocacy during Lent. Who is the Lazarus lying unnoticed at our gate? Are we too self-absorbed to notice those who hunger for our attention? What about the newcomers to our parishes, workplaces, neighborhoods, or gyms? What can we do to alleviate their fears and isolation? Today's Readings: Jeremiah 17:5–10; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4 and 6 (40:5a); Luke 16:19–31.

Friday, March 1

Confusing Our Expectations

It's a natural human expectation: do someone a favor or give them a gift, and anticipate thanks. If it doesn't come, it's normal to feel hurt. Through today's parable, Jesus shows how completely this expectation was reversed in his case. Few showed him gratitude; instead, he was killed. Amazingly, he continued to love us without reserve. Today, make a donation or do a good deed *anonymously*, with no expectation of thanks. Does this help us better understand what Jesus did? Today's Readings: Genesis 37:3–4, 12–13a, 17b–28a; Psalm 105:16–17, 18–19, 20–21 (5a); Matthew 21:33–43, 45–46.

Saturday, March 2

On the Lookout for Miracles

At the beginning of the day, ask God in the words of Micah, "show us marvelous things" (7:15). Repeat the request throughout the day when you have a moment: sitting at a traffic light, waiting for a phone connection, standing in line at the bank or grocery store, or heating food in the microwave. Do you notice more marvels as you weave the prayer throughout the day? Surely one marvel is the father's forgiveness of the prodigal son in today's Gospel. Can you accept God's forgiveness, no matter what you have done? Today's Readings: Micah 7:14–15, 18–20; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12 (8a); Luke 15:1–3, 11–32.



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 *Keeping the Seasons*

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