

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this Second Sunday of Lent, we celebrate the Transfiguration of Our Lord atop Mount Tabor. There Jesus revealed his glory before Peter, James and John. Alongside the transfiguration of Jesus, two great Old Testament figures appeared in their midst: Moses and Elijah. Moses was missioned to bring the Jewish People to the Promised Land but did not live to see that promise fulfilled. The prophet Elijah prefigures the miracles Jesus performed and his own Ascension into heaven. In 1 Kings, after he is commissioned by God, he was despondent and without food. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Get up and eat." This was repeated another time. "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God." [1 Kings 5-8]. In 2 Kings, we read about the multiplication of food, the healing of Naaman's leprosy and his, Elijah's own ascension.

John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, in their book *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament* published by Ignatius Press, offer this insight: "The Church especially treasures the narrative of Elijah's angelic food for the journey, seeing in it a new type of the Eucharist, our spiritual food for the journey of our exile here below, and especially of the viaticum, the last 'meal' before our final journey to God's presence on the 'holy mountain'. The intimate conversation between Elijah and God at Sinai, where Elijah finds God, not in dramatic displays of power, but in God's 'quiet whisper' or 'still small voice', is profoundly evocative of the experience of the devout believer who has long pursued the presence of God." The story of the Transfiguration is quite instructive in helping us to understand the absolute and inseparable relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

2 Timothy expresses some of the hardships which are inherent in following the Lord's call for us. As we see, this was true of Moses and Elijah who experienced great hardship but remained unrelenting in their fidelity and mission entrusted to their care by God. Yet, in the midst of their struggles, God remained close to them. His love and fidelity for them, indeed his faithfulness, is a part of his identity we have experienced in our own lives. "He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began." One of the great blessings and privileges of this Lenten season is that it affords us an opportunity for self-reflection and prayer in discerning the depths of God's presence in our lives. We know there are challenges to living the Gospel in our daily lives; yet, do we seek God's grace to free us more ardently to accept the truth even when it hurts? This self-denial places us more closely to our Lord, who suffered greatly to set us free and did so out of the freest, most liberating love.

Peter himself experienced this sense of loss when he is overcome with what was taking place before him in the Transfiguration. He said, "Lord, it is good that we are here." He didn't want the moment to end. He wanted to pitch a tent for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. God then spoke to them. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." The disciples became afraid but, as Jesus always does, assured them. "Rise, and do not be afraid." What the disciples yet did not understand was that Jesus would have to suffer, leave them, and rise again in order to experience the fullness of his glory. Let us join in this privileged place, listen to His Son, and so too share in the triumph of light over darkness, life over death.

~Fr. Tom