

# *Reflecting* On Sunday's Readings

February—2010

The following series is **free, downloadable small-group materials** based on each week's Mass readings and taking into account the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group's discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minute format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.
2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, "What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?" or "What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?" As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.
3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. **Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation.**
4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.
5. You can either read this week's Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, **so do not feel like you need to force a connection.** However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, "How do you see this passage tying into the theme of the readings?"
6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.
7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Gospel Reading, and the Second Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.
8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the small group environment and during Mass as you hear the Scripture is read and taught. **We would appreciate knowing if you are using the *Reflecting on Sunday's Readings*, and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.**

Sincerely in Christ,

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# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—February 7, 2010

**Introduction:** Someone once stated that, “God is looking for FAT Christians.” For those of us who tend to be a little plump, that was good news. However, the person was not referring to one’s weight but to the characteristics of being Faithful, Available and Teachable. In this week’s Gospel Reading Peter, a rough, simple, fisherman seems to have possessed these characteristics.

When Jesus showed up with a crowd on the shore where Peter and his partners were working, Peter could have been annoyed by the intrusion; after all he had been up all night working. When Jesus stepped into the empty boat, uninvited, and then asked Peter to move the boat away from the shore a bit, Peter could have simply responded, “Hey! Get out of my boat.” But he didn’t. He, and his possessions, were made available to Jesus.

Obviously impressed by Jesus’ teaching he didn’t hesitate to take the boat to deeper water where Jesus told him how to catch some fish. Here was a carpenter, not a fisherman, telling a professional fisherman, after a night of fishing failure, how and where to catch fish. Imagine how Peter could have responded! But in humility Peter was not only available to Jesus he was also teachable, responding, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”

Jesus’ teachings and demonstrations of power made an astonishing impression on Peter, and standing there in that old fishing boat he experienced an epiphany. Suddenly, he and his partners were conscious of their sinfulness as they became aware of who Jesus is. Consequently, when Jesus said “follow me” they left all and followed Jesus, demonstrating their faithfulness to respond to the light God gave.

Pope John Paul II speaks of this need to be responsive in *The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People*—“Therefore in the life of each member of the lay faithful there are particularly significant and decisive moments for discerning God’s call and embracing the mission entrusted by him. . . . No one must forget that the Lord, as the master of the laborers in the vineyard, calls at every hour of life so as to make his holy will more precisely and explicitly known. Therefore, the fundamental and continuous attitude of the disciple should be one of vigilance and a conscious attentiveness to the voice of God.”

Like Peter, we are becoming today, what we will be tomorrow. Peter’s later transformation from a tired, smelly, hard working fisherman, into an apostle and leader of the Church did not happen overnight. However, because he made some foundational decisions to be faithful, available and teachable to Jesus on that day he was able to experience future transformation. We may not have Isaiah’s revelation, or Peter’s experience, but we all have occasions where Jesus reveals himself to us to some degree, and we will hear his call to “come follow me.” Perhaps we will even hear it in these passages of Scripture. Will we make ourselves and our possessions available? Will we in humility be teachable and willing to learn? Will we in faithfulness follow? May the answer be, “Yes!”

## First Reading — Isaiah 6:1-8

<sup>1</sup>In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup>And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” <sup>4</sup>And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

<sup>6</sup>Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup>And he touched my mouth, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.” <sup>8</sup>And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

1. What connection is there between our concept of God and our availability to God?
2. How does consciousness of our forgiveness affect our responsiveness to God?

### **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 138:1-5, 7-8**

<sup>1</sup>I give thee thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing thy praise; <sup>2</sup>I bow down toward thy holy temple and give thanks to thy name for thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness; for thou hast exalted above everything thy name and thy word.

<sup>3</sup>On the day I called, thou didst answer me, my strength of soul thou didst increase. <sup>4</sup>All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, for they have heard the words of thy mouth; <sup>5</sup>and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD,

...<sup>7</sup>Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou dost preserve my life; thou dost stretch out thy hand against the wrath of my enemies, and thy right hand delivers me. <sup>8</sup>The LORD will fulfil his purpose for me; thy steadfast love, O LORD, endures for ever. Do not forsake the work of thy hands.

### **Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup>by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

<sup>8</sup>Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. <sup>11</sup>Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

3. Twice Paul used the term “in vain.” How do you think Paul would describe a Christian life lived in vain?

### **Gospel Reading — Luke 5:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. <sup>2</sup>And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. <sup>4</sup>And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” <sup>5</sup>And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” <sup>6</sup>And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, <sup>7</sup>they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” <sup>9</sup>For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; <sup>10</sup>and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” <sup>11</sup>And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

4. What is the most significant thing God ever asked you to do?

5. What is the object lesson Jesus taught by directing the fishermen where and how to take in a load of fish?

6. In each of the three readings individuals were confronted with an awareness of their unworthiness, followed by their responsive heart’s willingness to serve God. What contributes to the development of an improper heart toward God?

# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—February 14, 2010

**Introduction:** During the next several weeks the Gospel Readings will cover Jesus' teaching which we commonly refer to as the Beatitudes. Someone has cleverly renamed this passage the "Be-attitudes," because they accurately portray the way Christians ought to **be** in their **attitudes** and behavior.

It is interesting to note that the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful, and the persecuted are those who warrant Jesus' compassion and his blessing. The wealthy, the full, the happy, and the popular also warrant Jesus' compassion but it appears in the form of a woeful warning. What are we to conclude from this passage? Surely it does not suggest that it is preferable for people to be poor, hungry, sorrowful and persecuted, does it? Or that being wealthy, having a full stomach, being happy, or popular is inherently evil and to be avoided, does it? Perhaps he is pointing out that God is acutely aware and consciously concerned about the physical, emotional, social and economic inequities mankind heaps upon people.

We would be remiss if we did not also pay attention to what Jesus did not say. His remedy did not speak of the economic redistribution of wealth, nor of social or political revolution and revenge. His remedy, was to bless the unfortunate; "he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, 'Blessed ...'" Jesus undoubtedly knew that over time the nature of man would make moot the leveling of society by economic redistribution, etc., and humanity would simply supplant it with another system of equal or greater evils. **Jesus' remedy was to create a society of the compassionate within the society of the indifferent.** He is looking to his disciples to bless the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful, and the persecuted by sharing their wealth, their material possessions, their happiness, and their friendship. This was Jesus' remedy for alleviating suffering. As the song reminds us, "he has no body but ours."

A story of an early encounter St. Francis had with a leper provides helpful insight: "Francis felt revulsion rising in him. He could toss the man a few coins and ride away. But then a new vision dawned. In the person of this leper, God was holding out his hand to him. He sprang from his horse, pressed some money into the man's hand; then he grasped that hand and brought it to his lips. He kissed the hand, which received as if it had given. It was the hand of God which gave him strength to turn deep revulsion into love.

"This gesture is characteristic of Francis. He will never be the type to serve on a committee for aid to victims of leprosy. His kind of charity does not go about 'doing good works.' What he sees before him is not a 'life work,' but a human being. What he gives is not a handful of money, but himself ... ." (from *Francis of Assisi* by Fr. NG Van Doornik)

The physical, emotional, economic and social welfare of the unfortunate is of utmost importance to Jesus, and should be to us. The hope that Jesus provides to sustain them in their need is the reality and presence of the Kingdom of God, and a sure future in heaven, as seen in and through those who are his body. That is why our (his disciples) participation in relieving suffering is so essential. We are the living icons and visual aids of this heavenly reality. Consequently, we too must hold out not only the temporary hope of overcoming societal ills, but also hold out the transformational reality, and the open invitation to participate in life eternal through faith in Jesus. For like Jeremiah we do not want the poor, hungry, sorrowful, and persecuted to trust in the flesh of man, but rather to trust in the Lord.

## First Reading — Jeremiah 17:5-8

<sup>5</sup>Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the LORD. <sup>6</sup>He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. <sup>7</sup>"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.

<sup>8</sup>He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

1. Define what it means to "trust in the Lord."
2. Describe an occasion when you had to trust God.

**Responsorial Reading — Psalm 1:1-4, 6**

<sup>1</sup>Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup>but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup>He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

<sup>4</sup>The wicked are not so, but are like chaff which the wind drives away. . . . <sup>6</sup>for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

**Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20**

<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? . . . <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. <sup>17</sup>If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. <sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

3. What influence does the resurrection have on your life?

**Gospel Reading — Luke 6:17, 20-26**

<sup>17</sup>And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; . . .

<sup>20</sup>And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup>“Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. “Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

<sup>22</sup>“Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man!

<sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup>“But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup>“Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. “Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup>“Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. . . .”

4. In light of your current situation which of these statements by Jesus would be most applicable to you?

5. Within your social environment how have you seen persecution “on account of the Son of man”?

6. If you could be a light to people in one of these eight categories, which would it be, and how would you like to affect them?

7. Are you living a “Blessed are you” or a “Woe to you” life? Explain your answer.

# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT—February 21, 2010

**Introduction:** What image comes to your mind when you think of Lent? — Penance? Fasting? Sacrifice? A time to do something difficult and severe, or perhaps a time to give up or abstain from something dear to us? Though all of these may have their place during the Lenten season, Lent is primarily a time of preparation and growth through anticipation of and celebration of Christ's saving sacrifice. Marilyn Gustin points this out so aptly in her book *Living the Liturgy*, "It is a time for our own conscious, deliberate effort to cooperate in our own transformation. If our life in God is to become vital in our experience, we must be involved in ongoing and repeated transformation. It does not have to be forced, but it does have to be real. God's grace will do most of it, but our cooperation is required. During Lent we make our cooperation as conscious and disciplined as we can."

This cooperation can take many forms, from extended time reading the Scriptures and praying, to various forms of fasting to make us conscious of our Christ on whom we should focus. During this time of cooperation, though we may not have a face to face encounter with Satan as Jesus did in this week's Gospel Reading, we will undoubtedly be tempted to abandon our spiritual resolve and make light of our Lenten commitments. During Jesus' forty-day fast he too was tempted. We need to take courage and find strength in Jesus' steadfastness, and learn from his resistance. Jesus did not allow the illusionary promise of immediate gratification dissuade him from his deep-rooted commitment to entrust himself to the Father's will. Jesus confronted each temptation with confidence rooted in sacred Scripture and in knowledge of God. This intimate acquaintance with God's Word strengthened his resolve and provided the answers to combat each alluring temptation.

We have the sacred Scripture readily available to us in numerous translations. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us so that we could discern the truth and grow in Christ-likeness. He will readily and eagerly respond to our efforts to cooperate with his work of transformation. So whatever else we do during this Lenten season, we need to make sure that our hearts and minds are available to his transforming presence through the Sacraments, prayer, and reading and reflecting on the Holy Scripture. As Catholics we can readily take pride in the fact that we have preserved, defended, and venerated sacred Scripture for centuries. On the other hand we must acknowledge that many of us as Catholics are undeniably ignorant of both the Scripture and the teachings of the Church. Sadly for some Catholics' commitment to know and study God's written word is often less than that of many non-Catholic Christians. We would do well to reflect on St Chrysostom's perspective: "Here is why the exhortation of the Scripture is given: that the man of God may be rendered complete by it. Without this he cannot grow to maturity. You have the Scriptures, he says, in place of me. If you would learn anything, you may learn it from them."

One other aspect of Lent to consider is that transformation is not intended to be temporary, something that is present for only six weeks. Our disciplines and Lenten practices can be temporary but the changes they endeavor to bring about should be eternal. So perhaps it would be more beneficial to introduce into our lives during Lent, disciplines and practices that we would like to have become a permanent part of our relationship with Christ. This year during Lent, by the power of the Holy Spirit we can be introduced into a new depth of spiritual transformation. Practically, perhaps the place to begin this transformation is by asking the Holy Spirit to transform our commitment to daily read and reflect on sacred Scripture.

## **First Reading — Deut. 26:4-10**

<sup>4</sup>Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. <sup>5</sup>"And you shall make response before the LORD your God, 'A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. <sup>6</sup>And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. <sup>7</sup>Then we cried to the LORD the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; <sup>8</sup>and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; <sup>9</sup>and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>10</sup>And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O LORD, hast given me.' And you shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God; ...

1. What will be in “the basket from your hand,” or the “first of the fruit” as an expression of gratitude and worship this Lenten Season?

**Responsorial Reading — Psalm 91:1-2,10-15**

<sup>1</sup> He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, <sup>2</sup> will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”...<sup>10</sup> no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

<sup>11</sup> For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. <sup>12</sup> On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. <sup>13</sup> You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

<sup>14</sup> Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.

<sup>15</sup> When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him.

**Second Reading — Romans 10:8-13**

<sup>8</sup> But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); <sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. <sup>11</sup> The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him.

<sup>13</sup> For, “every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

2. What do these Scriptures say about salvation?

**Gospel Reading — Luke 4:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit <sup>2</sup> for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry.

<sup>3</sup> The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”

<sup>5</sup> And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, <sup>6</sup> and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. <sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours.”

<sup>8</sup> And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

<sup>9</sup> And he took him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; <sup>10</sup> for it is written, ‘He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you,’

<sup>11</sup> and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

<sup>12</sup> And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” <sup>13</sup> And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

3. Also remembering the first temptation by Satan in the Garden of Eden, what is always at the root of temptation?

4. What part did sacred Scripture play both in the temptation of Jesus and in his overcoming the temptation?

5. When was the next occasion when Satan tempted Jesus? (See Luke 23:33-43) How does it compare to this occasion?

# Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT—February 28, 2010

**Introduction:** The transfiguration, in and of itself, was a momentous event. Especially for these three Jewish disciples, the appearance of their great deliverer Moses and their fiery prophet Elijah was unbelievably significant. Moses and Elijah encapsulate the history of Israel, spanning the time of both the Law and the Prophets. Yet this momentous occasion pales in significance to the occasion that brought them all together; to speak of Jesus' coming departure (death). During Lent we are reliving this impending event, along with the dark days that lead up to Jesus' crucifixion. Hopefully, unlike Peter, James and John, we will not simply be dazzled by the glory of the transfiguration, but will discover the true meaning of the message delivered by it.

What do you imagine Moses and Elijah were thinking and experiencing? Here standing before them was the man, Son of God and Son of Man, who would make possible the genuine deliverance of Israel, the mission upon which Moses staked his life, and the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy regarding the holiness of God. I wonder if they were recalling God's words, "I have observed the misery of my people. . . . I have heard their cry. . . . I know their sufferings, and I have come to deliver them." At long last Israel would be set free, free from enslavement to sin, and along with Israel all mankind too could be saved. This inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation was always God's plan: that through Israel all nations of the earth should be blessed. How they must have glowed with the joy of knowing that now the promise was coming to completion, now it was about to be fulfilled.

Sometimes we smugly laugh at Peter's feeble attempt to process all that he saw. Prior to the cross, he did not comprehend all that was taking place, but he did recognize that it was a holy occasion. Do we, looking back with all of the wisdom of hindsight, also recognize and appropriately respond to this holy event and the occasion it foresaw? Probably not. Yet we can take courage that even in the midst of their ignorance the cloud of God's presence engulfed Peter, James and John, and spoke to them, so he might also overshadow us. We should not expect to be thrilled and excited by some "new" message, but simply expect to evermore hear the Father say, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him." And so we should, especially during Lent.

Saint Jerome reminds us, "'This is my Son; hear him,' my son, not Moses or Elijah. They are servants; this is the Son. This is my Son, of my nature, of my substance, abiding in me, and he is all that I am. This is my beloved Son. They, too, indeed are dear to me, but he is my beloved; hear him, therefore. They proclaim and teach him, but you, hear him. He is the Lord and master, they are companions in service. Moses and Elijah speak of Christ; they are your fellow servants. He is the Lord; hear him."

Peter desired to make three booths, or tents, for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Perhaps the "booth" we should build in honor of this redemptive departure of Jesus should not be a booth of tents but a spiritual space in our head and heart wherein we strain to grasp his every word.

As you enter this second week of Lent how will you create this space of receptivity in your life, a place to contemplate him, and listen to his voice. Wouldn't it have been a tragedy if Jesus had invited a fourth disciple to accompany him to the Mount of Transfiguration and the disciple had been too busy to participate with him? Similarly, wouldn't it be tragic if Jesus is inviting you to participate in another transformational experience and you are too busy?

## First Reading — Genesis 15:5-12,17-18

<sup>5</sup> And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>6</sup> And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

<sup>7</sup> And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." <sup>8</sup> But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" <sup>9</sup> He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a she-goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> And he brought him all these, cut them in two, and laid each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram; and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him. . . . <sup>17</sup> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed

between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.

1. How would you feel if you were in Abram’s shoes (sandals)?
2. What makes a covenant, a covenant?

**Responsorial Reading — Psalm 27:1,7-9,13-14**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? ... The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

<sup>7</sup> Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! <sup>8</sup> Thou hast said, “Seek ye my face.” My heart says to thee, “Thy face, LORD, do I seek.”

<sup>9</sup> Hide not thy face from me. Turn not thy servant away in anger, thou who hast been my help. Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation! ...

<sup>13</sup> I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! <sup>14</sup> Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the LORD!

**Second Reading — Philippians 3:17-4:1**

<sup>17</sup> Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

<sup>4:1</sup> Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

3. Describe what it means to live as an enemy of the cross of Christ. What would the opposite be?
4. Whom do you know that is a Christian example worth imitating? Why?

**Gospel Reading — Luke 9:28-36**

<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” <sup>36</sup> And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

5. What possible meanings does Jesus’ dazzling white raiment convey?
6. What similar messages encouraging us to “listen to Him,” are you aware of in Scripture? How can we enhance our ability to listen to Jesus?
7. What insight could this incident provide regarding the communion of the Saints?