

Second Sunday in Lent (C)
February 21, 2016.

He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself (Phil. 3:21).

On the second Sunday in Lent we always read the Gospel of the Transfiguration our Lord. We do so in order that our focus may be directed towards the glory of Easter. The glory revealed to Peter, James and John is a glimpse of the glory of the Resurrection, a glory that we are destined to share, as St. Paul assures us in our second reading: *He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of glory (Phil 3:21)*. We learn from our Gospel text that the disciples saw Moses and Elijah conversing with our Lord about His departure or *exodus which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem* (Preface for the Second Sunday in Lent, *The Roman Missal*): and that St. Peter expresses a desire remain on the mountain, to savour this glory. St. Luke however, tells us that *Peter did not know what he said (Lk. 9:33)*. Peter did not yet understand that Jesus was to accomplish His mission in Jerusalem where He would *be delivered into the hands of men (Lk. 9:44)*.

On the mountain what is revealed is a glory that is manifested both and equally so, in the victory of the Resurrection and the humiliation of the Cross. This revelation of glory in victory and in humiliation reveals to us the nature of God, and by extension, our nature; for we are created in the image and likeness of God. The God who has revealed Himself, and Whom we worship is both absolute power and absolute love; and yet, it is principally by way of LOVE that He reveals Himself and brings about our redemption and our salvation. Because we share in the life of God and because He Himself has shared our life, our suffering and death, we are able to perceive that in our suffering, especially when, through sickness and the diminishment that come with old age, our own bodies resemble *the body of our humiliation* spoken of by St. Paul, this is no less a revelation of the glory of God. This is a truth not seen but perceived through faith. All the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John, speak of God's humiliation as His exaltation, His *glory*. Our Lord spoke very specifically of this: *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself (Jn. 12:32)*. Our Lord's crucifixion is in fact, a moment of glory and the Mass which is the memorial of His Passion, enables us to share this glory. *The Mass is the only moment that transforms man on this earth* for here we unite all that we are and all that we suffer to the Mystery that has redeemed the world. When we suffer in union with Christ Our Lord, the words of the Apostle are realized: *In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church (Col. 1:24)*. It is then that we reflect the glory that is manifested in the Passion of Our Lord. When we suffer or assist others as they suffer, we participate in a great mystery. For this reason we pray, *Passion of Christ, strengthen me*.

Last Sunday, we noted that the Passion of Our Lord *completely suffices to fashion our lives...for the cross exemplifies every virtue*. Our Crucified Lord is both *the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24)*. It is to Him that we look in all our struggles and problems; and if we contemplate His Passion we are sure to receive the guidance needed to live a meaningful and holy life. You may have heard that earlier this month (Feb 3rd), His Eminence, Thomas Cardinal Collins made a presentation in Ottawa to the Special Joint Committee on Physician-assisted Dying. There is urgency to this issue as legislators debate and propose laws that will endanger the lives of the vulnerable and violate the

conscience rights of health-care providers. In his presentation the Cardinal observed rightly that *our worth as a society will be measured by the support we give to the vulnerable... What does it say about us as a society when the ill and the vulnerable in our midst feel like burdens?* The Cardinal has rightly called on levels of government in our country *to focus attention and resources on providing that care, which offers effective medical control of pain, and even more importantly, loving accompaniment to those who are approaching the inevitable end of life on earth.* I am afraid that this call will fall on deaf ears because generally speaking, our nation has been seduced by the culture of death; a culture that cannot fathom that there is any value in suffering, let alone sacrifice for the sake of others. We are engaged in a culture war with the culture of death and what is needed from faithful Catholics is a return to the traditional faith and a bold witness and firm commitment to the Gospel of Life; reverence for life from conception to natural death. We have come to this point by degrees chiefly because we have forgotten either deliberately or through negligence that sacrifice is at heart of an authentic and meaningful life.

As we contemplate the Passion of Our Lord during this Lenten time, we are mindful that in the Cross we have the ultimate and only adequate answer to the problem of evil, the only solution to the mystery of sin, and the answer also to life's meaning and purpose. Our profession of faith, if taken seriously, is journey into the depth of this mystery. Our Crucified Saviour reveals the ineffable love of God for sinners and the power of God veiled in weakness.

St. Luke tells that the day after the experience of Our Lords' Transfiguration, while the disciples were marvelling (Cf. *Lk.* 9:33) at Our Lord's glorious deeds, He said to them: *let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men* (*Lk.* 9:44). Perhaps we may not yet fully understand why our Lord brought about our salvation in such weakness, diminishment and pain. Yet no human life is exempt from diminishment and pain; and this shared experience cannot be without value and purpose. How will we communicate this to the greater community of our town? I suggest that all of us take this question to prayer.

O Sacred Banquet in which Christ is received as food: the memory of His Passion is recalled, the soul is filled with grace and to us is given a pledge of our future glory. This is a wonderful summary of the Mass which we devoutly celebrate each Sunday. We perceive a purpose in the hidden glory of the Crucified Christ. The Crucifix that hangs before us is a vivid image of the poverty, humility and vulnerability of suffering; but also of suffering's redemptive power. Our Lady and St. John exemplify the care and compassionate support that we should provide for those who suffer. The Blessed Sacrament which we reverently cherish in our tabernacle is the Sacrament of the Cross but no less the *pledge of our future glory.* These reveal a love so powerful that neither hate nor death could conquer it; and because we receive and worship this Sacrament, this same love is at work in our hearts. By its power great deeds of love are done and by its power our understanding increases and deepens so that in time, we come to see and to understand that the Passion of our Lord truly is our strength; and that our own sufferings, mysterious as they may be in both their origin and purpose place us in the very heart of the Paschal Mystery. Suffering is not meaningless nor is it without purpose. May our Lenten discipline and prayer help us to enter more fully into the Mystery of our Lord's Passion and to behold His glory.