

Sunday Message

2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • 1 March 2026 • Psalter Week 2

EVERYONE NEEDS GOOD FRIENDS

MATTHEW 17:1-9



Every year the story of the transfiguration is read on the Second Sunday of Lent. Jesus takes three of his friends up a mountain to pray with him.

While there, something extraordinary happens. It's as if Peter, James and John are caught up in a dream and, suddenly, they see Jesus in all his heavenly glory with Moses and Elijah, two of the great Old Testament figures. They see Jesus as he really is – transformed, radiant. Peter is so overcome by what he sees that he wishes it could last for ever. He suggests constructing three tents or temporary dwelling places – one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. But soon the vision ends, and when the three look up, they see 'only Jesus'. The moment has passed but it is one they will never forget.

It is telling that the three disciples Jesus chooses to accompany him to the mountain top are Peter, James and John. Jesus had selected a group of 12 to be his inner circle, as it were. But among that group, it seems these three friends were especially close to him.

Peter, James and John are present with Jesus at some of the most crucial moments of his life. He selects these three to accompany him (along with her parents) when he restores the daughter of Jairus to life. They see with their own eyes that Jesus is the Lord of life, who has authority even over death. These are the three he asks to accompany him to the garden of Gethsemane in his hour of greatest need before his passion and death. And today's Gospel tells us that these are the three who witness his transfiguration, when he is revealed in all his glory.

Jesus wanted Peter, James and John to witness these pivotal moments in his life. They would be able to speak of these events after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. But Jesus probably also turned to them as good friends. He needed their companionship, their support, their presence. He had many followers and acquaintances but he felt the very human need for some closer, more intimate, friendships. Clearly, Peter, James and John had the qualities Jesus was looking for, and so they became his 'right-hand' men, those he regarded as his most trusted associates.

Jesus knew the importance of friendship. In his humanity, he knew that good friendships make life more enjoyable and that good friends help us through the difficult times that will inevitably come our way. ■

LEARN

The reason the transfiguration takes place at this time in Matthew's Gospel is to give the disciples a boost. Jesus knows there will be tough times ahead. He knows what will happen to him in Jerusalem and that life will be difficult for his followers. The transfiguration is a little glimpse of heaven. It shows them who Jesus really is, and gives them a foretaste of what awaits them if they remain faithful to their Master.

PRAY

Pray for your friends. Thank God for the gift of true friendship.

SAY

"Lord, help me to live in such a way as to enjoy your company in heaven for ever. Amen."

DO

On the mountaintop, the three disciples saw Jesus in his radiant glory. Try to see the God-given beauty in all you meet.

REFLECT

One of the most wonderful opportunities created by the internet is how it allows people to communicate instantly practically anywhere. It is possible to go online and chat with people thousands of miles away. It was a great help to people forced to practise social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

But social media and the world wide web have significant downsides, as we now know only too well. We live in the era of fake news and of deepfake technology. You can create a deepfake video or image of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, typically used maliciously or to spread false information. Artificial Intelligence is making this technology ever more sophisticated and difficult to detect.

It means we can't always be sure whether a news item or story is true or false. And we won't always know for sure whether a stranger we are chatting to online is who they claim to be. Just as in everyday life we can wear a mask so that others won't know what we're really thinking, or to protect ourselves from being hurt, so also people can create false digital profiles or personas in order to make themselves more appealing or conceal their true intentions. For whatever reason, they do not want to reveal their real selves, their true face.

In the story of the transfiguration Jesus revealed his true face to his three closest friends. They saw him as he really is in his heavenly glory. The literal meaning of "transfiguration" is to show one's true face. And that's what happened on the mountain top – Peter, James and John saw Jesus' radiant, glorified face. They saw him as he really is – and it took their breath away. They wanted the moment to last for ever.

Today's Gospel challenges us to be honest in our relationship with God and others. God loves us as we are and knows us better than we know ourselves. We need not be afraid to show him our true face. Good friendships depend on the willingness to show our true face, be our true self. That's how we build friendships that last. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face.
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face from me.*

Or

*Remember your compassion, O Lord,
and your merciful love, for they are from of old.
Let not our enemies exult over us.
Redeem us, O God of Israel, from all our distress.*

COLLECT

O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Genesis 12:1-4a

A reading from the Book of Genesis.

In those days: The LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram went, as the LORD told him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 33(32):4-5. 18-19. 20, 22. R. 22

R: *May your merciful love be upon us,
as we hope in you, O LORD.*

1. The word of the LORD is upright, and all his works to be trusted. The LORD loves justice and right, and his merciful love fills the earth. **R.**
2. Yes, the LORD's eyes are on those who fear him, who hope in his merciful love, to rescue their soul from death, to keep them alive in famine. **R.**
3. Our soul is waiting for the LORD. He is our help and our shield. May your merciful love be upon us, as we hope in you, O LORD. **R.**

SECOND READING 2 Timothy 1:8b-10

A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Beloved: We share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Matthew 17:5

R: *Glory to you, O Christ, Wisdom of God the Father.*

From a bright cloud, the Father's voice was heard:

'This is my beloved Son, listen to him'.

R: *Glory to you, O Christ, Wisdom of God the Father.*

GOSPEL Matthew 17:9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

At that time: Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.' And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one, but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, 'Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this sacrifice, O Lord, we pray, cleanse us of our faults and sanctify your faithful in body and mind for the celebration of the paschal festivities. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;
listen to him.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we receive these glorious mysteries, we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord, for allowing us while still on earth to be partakers even now of the things of heaven. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.