2nd Sunday of Lent 2025

This is the eightieth year since the end of The Second World War. As the anniversary of the cessation of hostilities draws closer, there will, undoubtedly, be programmes stirring up memories of those horrendous years. Yet, it is important to remember those years of war, not in any jingoistic sense, but in the hope, that such remembrance will have positive implications for the future of the world, particularly at this time when world peace is, possibly, being threatened.

In everyday conversations we are constantly recalling events and experiences – how often in a day does a conversation begin, “Do you remember”? The past influences our present, and reflecting upon the past can shape our future. T.S. Eliot wrote “Time present and time past/ Are both perhaps present in time future” *(Burnt Norton, 1)*. But remembering is also a practice of profound religious importance. The ancient prophets, such as Elijah, constantly exhorted the People of God to remember the goodness and mercy of God, and, particularly, how God, through his servant Moses, liberated them from slavery in Egypt.

In every Mass, we recall how Jesus, on the night of the Last Supper, took bread and the wine, and having declared “This is my body….this is my blood”, he then commanded his disciples, “Do this in memory of me”. By our solemn remembering, in the present his death and resurrection, we enter into to Jesus’ self-giving and loving heart, and, even more importantly, he enters into our hearts. The Mass raises our heads above the sometimes drabness of ordinary existence, and enables us to look forward to those splendours our faith promises.

Today’s Gospel passage could be described as “the making of a memory”. On the mountain, to which Jesus had taken them, the apostles, caught a glimpse of the majesty of God shining through the humanity of Christ – there he was transfigured. While Peter, at the time, cried out, “*Master, it is wonderful for us to be here”,* the real purpose of the experience was, that the memory of it would strengthen their faith in Jesus, and brace them for the coming crisis of the crucifixion.

The crisis of the crucifixion lies like a shadow behind the Transfiguration event. On this Lenten day, the reference to Jesus going up the mountain to pray, turns our minds to Jerusalem, where Jesus, would be taken to the Hill of Calvary. The apostles saw Jesus in glory, but, on Calvary, he would be seen humiliated as a criminal. They beheld him, *“his clothing….as brilliant as lightening”;* on Calvary, he would be stripped naked. He was flanked by two great religious figures, Moses and Elijah; but on the cross, there would be a thief on either side. Peter, beholding the vision, blurted out *“it is wonderful for us to be here”*; but he would not be at Calvary, he would be hiding in fear and shame, having denied his Lord. At the Transfiguration, God declared *“This is my Son, the chosen...”*; beneath the cross, it would be a pagan soldier who declared “*this man was indeed the Son of God.”*

With hindsight, we know that, in spite of their Transfiguration experience, the apostles following of Jesus did not run smoothly - sometimes they succeeded, frequently they failed, nevertheless, the memory of that “moment of grace” on the mountain kept bringing them back to Jesus. We all have memories that keep bringing us back to Jesus, because God does indeed touch our lives, not perhaps in the extraordinary way witnessed by the apostles, but rather through the ordinariness of life.

In our everyday lives, there are moments, or occasions, in which the border between heaven and earth appears to fade, and God's presence touches our lives, and we are blessed with a faint glimpse of God's glory. Such experiences can be triggered perhaps by love, or by a kindness done, or in prayer, or by beautiful music, or a piece of art, or by the grandeur of a landscape, or the sound of the sea breaking on an empty beach. Here we can catch a glimpse of God. The poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, writes, “Earth’s crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God; But only he who sees, takes off his shoes” *(cf Aurora Leigh).*

The real purpose of such moments is not only to lift our spirits, but to enable us to persevere in those times when we stand on the Hill of Calvary, and our faith is tested. We should recall them and appreciate their reassuring significance - God, in his love, really does touch our lives. Recalling those occasions, not only keeps us going in times of trouble and vexation, but also keeps us fixed on our destiny. St. Paul, in today's second reading, reminds us: *“from heaven comes the Saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body.”* Today’s Gospel passage gives us a glimpse of what God desires for us – we are destined for glory!

*“Lord,*

*it is wonderful for us to be here;*

*may your Mass touch our lives,*

*and transfigure us by your love”.* **Amen.**