

The Second Sunday of Lent (Year C)

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| <i>First Reading</i> | Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18 |
| <i>Response</i> | The Lord is my light and my salvation. |
| <i>Psalm</i> | Psalm 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14 |
| <i>Second Reading</i> | Philippians 3:17—4:1 |
| <i>Gospel Acclamation</i> | From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard: This is my beloved Son, hear him. |
| <i>Gospel</i> | Luke 9:28B-36 |

The Second Sunday of Lent in Year C brings us to the event of Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain. I might've mentioned this before, but it's important to stress again that every year, during the Lenten season, the Church has certain episodes from the gospels that are kind of "anchors" for the Lenten journey. So every year on the First Sunday of Lent we'll begin with the temptations of Jesus in the desert. And the same thing's true of the Second Sunday of Lent. Every year, what we focus on is the mystery of Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain. So because we're in Year C, today we're going to look at Luke's account of the transfiguration, we'll read that gospel text, and I want to highlight a few elements that are (kind of) distinctive to or unique to Luke's account, and then we'll go back and look at the Old Testament background and see what the Church is up to on this Second Sunday of Lent. So the text for today is the Gospel of Luke 9:28-36, and it reads as follows:

Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Eli'jah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. 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. 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 Eli'jah" -- not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered

the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" 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.¹

Alright, so let's pause there. Now, again, this is a very famous episode. It's one of the mysteries of the rosary. It's in the Luminous Mysteries; it's the Mystery of the Transfiguration, so we're all very familiar with it. It's also recorded in Matthew and Mark's gospel, so there are three different accounts of the transfiguration in the New Testament. In this case though, Luke's account is really unique and distinctive. It has several elements of it that are only found in Luke's version, that I think are worthy of highlighting to show some of the elements of this mystery that Luke wants us to contemplate.

The first aspect of Luke's account that's very interesting is that whereas all three gospels tell you that the transfiguration takes place on a mountain, Luke alone tells you what Jesus was doing on the mountain. He tells you that Jesus went up the mountain to pray. And this actually parallels an earlier passage in Luke's gospel in Luke 6:12, before Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount (or the Sermon on the Plains) in the Gospel of Luke. It actually says that he went up the mountain to pray and all night he continued in prayer to God. So I just bring that up because it's an interesting window into Jesus' prayer life. We don't often think about that. You might think, "What's your prayer life like? Where do you like to pray? When do you like to pray? Is it in the morning, at night, morning and night? Where do you go when you want to pray? What special place is there?" Well, Luke's gospel makes clear to us that Jesus liked to pray on mountains. He would go up the mountain for the solitude of the mountain, but also too, if you look at the Bible, mountains are always sacred places throughout the Old Testament (I always tell my students this whenever I'm teaching the Old Testament), keep your eyes on the mountains because important things happen on mountains. Whenever God makes a covenant, he always makes his covenants with his people on mountains. Whether it's Mt. Sinai and the Mosaic Covenant, or Mt. Zion and the Davidic Covenant, or whether it's Mt. Ararat in the Noahic Covenant, and even Eden itself (in Jewish tradition) was regarded as a mountain. The mountains are sacred places; they're

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

like places where heaven and earth meet. And so Jesus liked to get away from the crowds, to be in solitude with his father, and to pray on the mountain. So he's gone up this mountain, an unnamed mountain (we don't know what mountain it was), the traditional site is Mt. Tabor in Galilee, but the gospels don't tell us that for sure. But he goes up the mountain and he's there to pray. And he takes with him his three disciples, Peter, James and John, who are part of the inner circle of the twelve, who accompany him on several events (or in several occasions) where Jesus goes and does something special, something set apart, something significant. Whether it's the raising of Jairus' daughter, where he only takes Peter, James and John with him, or (as we're going to see on Passion Sunday) whether it's his prayer in Gethsemane, where Jesus takes these particular three disciples who are very intimate with him away from the twelve as a (kind of) inner circle. So they go up the mountain and Peter, John, and James are with him to pray.

Real quick too, just by the way; as a side note for all my Carmelite friends out there, I think it's interesting that in the Gospel of Luke Jesus goes up the mountain to pray, because if you look at the history of Christian spirituality and Christian mysticism, the idea of looking at the spiritual life as climbing a mountain is something that's really prevalent in the works of various mystics going all the way back to St. Gregory of Nyssa with the life of Moses. Moses' ascent of the mountain of Sinai, forty days and forty nights on the mountain, is a (kind of) symbol of the ascent of the soul to be with God. And of course the classic example of this is St. John of the Cross, the ascent of Mt. Carmel and his guide to making progress in the spiritual life is like climbing a mountain. So I think it's interesting that Jesus himself liked to pray on mountaintops.

The second aspect of Luke's account has to do just with the transfiguration itself. So we see other echoes of the exodus besides the ascent of the mountaintop, when it says the appearance of Jesus' face was changed and his raiment became dazzling white. If you know the book of Exodus, you will recall that after Moses goes up Mt. Sinai and spends forty days and forty nights in the glory cloud (that is on top of the mountain, the pillar of fire and smoke), in the presence of the Lord, when he comes down the mountain, his face is glowing with the reflected light of God's glory. And the Israelites don't want to look at his face because they themselves are very sinful and instead of being attracted by the light of God's glory, they're repelled by it and so Moses has to put a veil over his face. So this is another one of those elements in of Luke's gospel where Jesus is recapitulating various episodes and persons from the Old Testament but then transcending them in himself. In this

account of the transfiguration, Jesus is like a new Moses, who goes up the mountain to be with God and to be in the presence of God and to pray, but unlike Moses, who simply reflects the light of God (whose presence he's been in), you get the impression here that Jesus' face is being illuminated (so-to-speak) from within. The veil of his divine glory is being lifted and his face is dazzling white and his clothing is white as well (which, in the Old Testament by the way, is always an image for heavenly beings and heavenly glory). So (for example), in the book of Daniel (or elsewhere), the clothing of angels will be white clothing (we see this in the gospels themselves with the angels that appear at the empty tomb). Angels wear white clothes, that's the kind of clothing they wear. Also in the book of Daniel 12, in the resurrection, it says that the righteous will shine like the sun. They will be clothed (so-to-speak) with light.

So what's happening in the transfiguration (and this is so crucial) is that from a Jewish perspective, for a person's face to be illuminated with light and for his clothing to be transformed into dazzling light, shows the presence of divine glory (the divine light), but it's also a foretaste of the resurrection because in the resurrection, the righteous will shine like the sun; they will be like stars in heaven. Since ancient times, the transfiguration of Jesus has been understood as a kind of foretaste of the glory of the resurrection. It's both an unveiling of Jesus' divinity (of his divine glory), but also an anticipation of the glory to come that will take place after his resurrection from the dead. In fact, some scholars have paralleled the fact that you have these two mountains in the Gospel of Luke: the mountain of the transfiguration, where Jesus reveals his glory, and then you have the mountain of Golgotha, the hill of the cross, where we're going to see the crucifixion, where Jesus' divinity and his power and his glory are going to be hidden under the shame and the suffering and the death that he experiences on the cross. There's a sense in which you can argue that what Jesus is doing here is giving his inner most circle of disciples a glimpse of his glory as a way of preparing them for his passion and his death that are going to take place on another mountain (the mountain of Calvary).

A third element of the transfiguration that's distinctive of Luke (and this one's the one that's most fascinating to me) is that when Moses and Eli'jah appear to him, it actually tells us what they were talking about. Luke alone does this. It says that they were speaking of his departure which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Now the RSV here has the word "departure" as a translation. I like the New American Bible's translation better because it's more accurate. The New American Bible says "of his exodus" that he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. And that's a good

translation because the Greek word is actually *exodos*, and it means departure (or journey), but the echo of the exodus in the book of Exodus is much clearer when you just translate it (or transliterate it) in a literal fashion. What does that mean though? What is Jesus' exodus that he's going to accomplish at Jerusalem and why was it so important that Moses and Eli'jah are discussing that exodus with him? I think the answer here is simple but it's really significant. Namely, that in the Old Testament, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, over and over again, depict the future age of salvation as a new exodus. That when God comes in the future he's going to save his people in ways that are similar to the way he saved them in the past at the exodus at the time of Moses. So, it's going to be a new exodus and Jesus (in Luke 9) is being revealed as the one who's going to inaugurate that new exodus and accomplish it in Jerusalem.

Now, to be very specific here, it's really crucial to recognize that the new exodus is both similar to the old and different from the old. If you think about it this way, both of them are similar in the sense that they involve a journey that has a beginning and an end, and it's a journey that is meant to set the people of God free and bring them home to the promised land. However, they're different in their locations and in their destinies. The old exodus (think about it) began in Egypt and then ended in Jerusalem in the sense that the Israelites, the twelve tribes, were set free from slavery to pharaoh, they journeyed through the wilderness for forty years, and then they ended up in the promised land, fought the enemies of Israel (the Canaanites), and then finally, built the city of Jerusalem and the temple at the time of David (that's kind of like the apex or completion of the exodus journey). You can see this in Exodus 15 where it talks about how God is going to bring a sanctuary that the people are going to worship him in. The old exodus begins in Egypt, ends in Jerusalem, whereas Jesus' exodus (this is important), it begins in Jerusalem and where does it end? Not in the earthly promised land, but in the heavenly promised land. And you can see this in the last line of Luke. How does Luke's gospel end? It ends not just with Jesus being raised from the dead, but ascending into heaven. His departure is going to be his passion, death, resurrection and ascension. His exodus is his passion, death, resurrection and ascension into the heavenly Promised Land. So he reveals that the ultimate destination of the exodus he wishes to accomplish is the heavenly, and not the earthly land of Canaan. It's the transcendent reality. It's a greater exodus than the first exodus, but the only way to that is through the cross; through his passion and his death. So you can see, that although the transfiguration has all these elements of glory, it also is pointing us already (already in the 2nd

week of Lent), we are looking ahead to the cross and the resurrection, and even the ascension.

You can image this must have been an overwhelming experience for the Apostles, and so they don't know quite what to do with it. Peter and those who were with him (Peter, James and John), they're there, and notice it says (I love this): that they were heavy with sleep. So they were kind of falling asleep. Now it doesn't tell us why they were sleepy, but I have to wonder if this is one of those cases where Jesus is up all night praying and so they begin to get sleepy, because in the Gospel of Luke 6:12, it tells us that Jesus goes up the mountain and prays all night long. Now I don't know if you've ever done that, prayed for 8, 9, 10 hours, but that's Jesus' prayer. And I can just imagine (I don't know this for certain), the Apostles prayed for 20 minutes, 30 minutes, maybe an hour? They're done, and Jesus just keeps praying. One hour, two hours, three hours, and it's the middle of the night and they're getting sleepy, so when the transfiguration occurs, it kind of wakes them from their sleep, but they're still groggy and they see Jesus and these two men in glory speaking with one another. And as the two men are departing, Peter says, "Master it's good that we're here, why don't we make three booths? One for you, one for Moses, and one for Eli'jah." Now, what is Peter talking about here? Well it's not exactly clear, but the word "booths" in Hebrew is a very significant word. It can also be translated as tabernacles or tents. Most scholars think that Peter here is alluding to the feast of booths (*Sukkot* in Hebrew), or the Feast of Tabernacles (it's commonly translated) that's mentioned in the book of Leviticus 23.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a fall festival, it was the most joyful of the annual feasts of the Jewish year, most of us are familiar with Passover in the spring, maybe the Day of Atonement in the fall, we're not often as familiar with Feast of Tabernacles, which was basically a remembrance of Israel's time in the desert at the time of exodus. And so what the Jewish people would do is that they'd go to Jerusalem and they would live in booths around the city (little tents) in order to recapitulate the exodus journey that culminated in the arrival in the city of Jerusalem. And in ancient Jewish tradition outside the bible, the Feast of Tabernacles was also seen as a kind of anticipation of the glory of the new creation, of the new Promised Land that Isaiah spoke of at the time of the new exodus. On the one hand, sometimes people kind of depict Peter as a buffoon here, like "let's make a tent for you, and Moses, and Eli'jah to relax and hang out in", and there may be an element of that there because Luke says he didn't know what he was saying, he obviously doesn't grasp the significance (some significance) of what's taking place. But, in a

first century Jewish context, Peter's response is actually somewhat reasonable because if, as a first century Jew, you associated tabernacles with the new creation, the resurrection, the eschaton (the end of time), and you encounter Moses and Eli'jah in their glory talking with Jesus about his exodus that he's going to accomplish in Jerusalem, for a Jew, the Feast of Tabernacles was like the feast of what heaven would be like. And so it makes sense for Peter to want to (kind of) stay in that moment by doing what Jews did as they thought about the world to come. Building booths, and (kind of) celebrating this joyful Feast of Tabernacles: a memory of the exodus from Egypt and an anticipation of a new exodus. However, it seems here that Peter doesn't quite understand because what he doesn't realize is two things: first, they're not going to stay on the mountain of transfiguration. They have not reached the resurrection yet. Jesus has another mountain he still has to go to, and that's the mountain of Calvary. So they can't just rest in the glory and the consolation of what's happening on that mountain. Jesus still has to accomplish his exodus and that's not going to happen until he goes to Jerusalem and is crucified, and dies on the cross. So that's an element of it there, that I think (at least) makes some sense of why Peter speaks about making booths for Jesus, and Moses, and Eli'jah.

With that said, another element of the exodus (or that echoes the exodus) takes place. Because what happens is, once Moses and Eli'jah are departing, a cloud comes and overshadows Jesus, and Peter, and James, and John, and as they enter into the cloud this voice comes out of the cloud, "This is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him." Now, if you're a Jew, and you know the Torah, the idea of a mountain being overshadowed by a cloud with a voice from heaven speaking out of it, it's going to be pretty familiar to you, it's going to once again echo what happened on Mt. Sinai, which in the book of Exodus was covered with the Shekinah glory cloud (the cloud of divine glory), from which the Lord spoke and gave the 10 commandments and the law to Israel. So, in this case, this is kind of like a new Sinai, with one major exception. In this new Sinai, God speaks and reveals his identity as father and the identity of Jesus as his chosen one, as his son, as the one who has a unique relationship with him. He doesn't say "this is my prophet, this is my king, this is my priest..." It's "this is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him." And that echo there, that explicit command, "listen to him", actually harkens back to Deuteronomy 18:5, which was a prophecy of the new Moses; that one day a figure like Moses would come and Moses tells the Israelites, "You are to listen to him, you are to heed him." So Jesus here is being revealed here as the new Moses and even more as the son of God.

Now, whenever you see mountains, and clouds, and voices, what you're dealing with is what scholars refer to as a "theophany", a revelation of God, an appearance of God. *Theos* is the Greek word for God, *Phaino* means "to appear", so an "appearance of God". And in this case (I think) the transfiguration as a theophany is very, very significant for the Gospel of Luke and for the whole Christian tradition, because it's one of the few times in the gospels where God not only appears, but reveals his triune nature: the fact that he is not just one God, but one God in three persons. We see the revelation of the Trinity manifest in the account of the transfiguration. Now, don't get me wrong, the word "trinity" does not appear here. Later doctrinal clarifications, like "consubstantial with the father", that kind of terminology, that's not being utilized here. But what is being revealed is there are three persons involved in the transfiguration, and you can see those three persons in this way: first, obviously, the Father. Because when he speaks from heaven, he identifies Jesus as his son. So, by implication, this reveals that God is father. Second, the revelation of Jesus being identified not just as Messiah or priest or king, but as the son, and then finally, the Holy Spirit; where is the Holy Spirit here? Well, it's not as clear or as explicit as say the baptism of Jesus, where it says "the spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove", but the spirit is present in the cloud that overshadowed them, because (and Luke is really clear about this) the language of a cloud overshadowing has already appeared in Luke's gospel in the story of the annunciation. So in the annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, he says these words: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you." That's Luke 1:35. And the Greek word there for "overshadow" is *Episkiazane*. It's the same word used for the cloud that overshadows Mary and the cloud that overshadows Jesus and the Apostles on the mountain of transfiguration. So there's a parallelism in Gabriel's words. The glory cloud and the Holy Spirit are two ways of referring to same reality. When the Apostles and Jesus are overshadowed on the mountain of transfiguration, that cloud is a visible manifestation of the third person of the Trinity, who is the Holy Spirit. So you can really say that the transfiguration of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, just like the baptism of Jesus, is a Trinitarian mystery. It's a revelation of the triune God.

With all that in mind, that's the gospel for today. What about the Old Testament? Well I'm going to stress this over and over again throughout the Season of Lent. Unlike Ordinary Time, where the Old Testament and the New Testament gospel are chosen according to the principle of harmony or typology, where one points forward to the other and the new is fulfilled in the old, during Lent, the Old Testament reading is chosen according to the principle of salvation history. In other words,

each of the Old Testament readings for the Sundays of Lent is meant to take us through major moments in the history of salvation in the Old Testament. In this case, the moment that the Church puts before us is the call of Abraham and the promise made to Abraham by God of the multitude of descendants that he would be father to. So let's read that passage here. It's Genesis 15:5-12, and 17-18. This is what it says:

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." And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chalde'ans, to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a she-goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon." 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. And when birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram; and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 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 Euphra'tes,

Okay, so why does the Church choose this passage for today? There are a couple of key elements in it here that are very significant in the history of Israel and the history of salvation. First, God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of a multitude of descendants. So at this point in salvation history, Abraham is still Abram; he does not yet have a son, and although the lectionary doesn't include it, the verses immediately before this are Abram saying to God "I still continue without an heir, and is Eliazer of Damascus (who isn't even my child), is he going to end up being the heir to my estate?" And so God takes him outside and says to him, "Count the stars if you're able. So shall your descendants be." And Abram believed God, and God reckons it to him as righteousness. This moment in salvation history is the moment when Abram becomes our father in faith, because he trusts

against all rational observation that he will in fact have his child and that his descendants will not just exist but they will be as numerous as the stars of heaven, because Abram has faith in God's promise, God reckons it to him as righteousness. And in response to that, God makes this covenant with Abraham (or with Abram, there I go again, I keep wanting to change his name, he's not going to do this yet; he's going to change the name later), which, by the way, the name "Abram" means "exalted father" or "great father"; "Abraham" means "father of a multitude". So you can even see in Abram's name there what his role is going to be in salvation history. He's going to be our father in faith; he's going to be the father of a multitude.

The first stage of his role as the father of faith and the father of a multitude is going to be the covenant that God makes with him to give him the Promised Land, to give him the land of Canaan as the destination, as the home that his descendants will eventually settle after their exile during the time of the exodus from Egypt. And so what God is doing here is he's using the covenant sacrifice as a way of sealing the deal. See, in ancient times, there was a major difference between a promise and a covenant. A promise is "I give you my word that I'm going to do something", but a covenant isn't just sealed with someone's word, it's sealed with sacrifice, with a kind of divine oath, ratifying the promise through the blood of sacrifice. And you'll see this over and over again in the Old Testament. So God promises Abram that he's going to give him the land, but he also makes a covenant with him through these animal sacrifices. If you want a (kind of) contemporary analogy, I remember when I was a boy, people used to become "blood brothers". If you wanted to become more than friends, you'd cut your hand, you'd put the blood together and say, "Okay now we're blood brothers", because the idea of the blood was a symbol for the binding character of a family relationship. So when God instructs Abram to offer a sacrifice, it's like a way of sealing the promise and making Abraham family, like he is now part of the sacred family of God, this family oath that we call a "covenant": a sacred family bond that binds God and his people together in a relationship that's not going to be broken, so that God's oath will come to fulfillment.

I also can't help but notice here too, just as a little side note (something funny), in verse 15 when he says the sun had gone down, "behold a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces". My students always ask me, "Dr. Pitre, what is this 'smoking fire pot' and this 'flaming torch'?" Well, first of all, we want to make sure we know what it's not. In some old copies of the lectionary, the old

translation of the New American Bible had “a smoking brazier”, which is a pot, a metal pot, that into which coals would be placed, and you would light a fire to keep you warm; a brazier. But invariably, when I’ve been at Churches where they’re using the old translation of the lectionary there, I’ve heard more than one occasion someone get up and say, “a flaming torch and a smoking brassiere appeared to Abraham”, so we want to make sure that we read that verse correctly. It is not a smoking brassiere, it’s a smoking brazier, or more helpfully (or more clearly), a smoking fire pot. So, that’s what it’s not, but what does it symbolize? Well, think about it. We’ve already seen how on top of the mountain of transfiguration, God appears in the cloud of glory, and that echoes back to Mt. Sinai. How does God appear there? Well he manifests himself in the pillar of smoke by day with the pillar of fire by night. So, whenever you see supernatural fire or fire from heaven, it’s a sign of God’s presence (it’s also a sign that he’s accepting Abraham’s sacrifice). In the temple with the prophet Eli’jah, when fire comes down from heaven and consumes the sacrifice, it manifests that God is present and that he’s accepted the sacrifice. And that’s what’s happening here with Abraham’s flaming torch and smoking fire pot. So God makes this covenant of the Promised Land and now, even though they aren’t chosen to go together, I still think it’s helpful to note that whereas Abraham’s being promised that earthly Promised Land, what’s going to happen in the new exodus of Jesus? He’s going to point us to a heavenly Promised Land, a heavenly exodus, a new exodus.

Alright, and finally then the psalm for today is “The Lord is my light, my salvation”; a beautiful psalm. Whenever you look at the responsorial psalms for the masses, a helpful clue to you might be this (as to how to read them): whereas the gospel and the Old Testament invariably give us things to meditate, to ponder with our minds, the psalm helps us understand what God wants us to do with our will. What it should stir up in our affections toward God as we ponder these mysteries, as we hear these words, and so in this case the responsorial psalm, what does it say? “Thy face, O Lord, do I seek. The Lord is my light and my salvation.” So the story of the transfiguration should move us to desire to see what Peter, and James and John saw: to see the face of the Lord, to let the Lord be our light and to let the Lord be our salvation, and that’s really what all of salvation history’s all about. Ultimately, the glory of the resurrection isn’t just going to be our resurrected bodies and an end to death and suffering. The true happiness of the resurrection is the beatific vision, it’s the “seeing God, face-to-face”. So do you long for that? Do you want that? Is that your goal in life, is to see the Lord face-to-face? Do you seek his face? That’s what the psalm is trying to stir up in our hearts for today as we ponder

the great mystery of the transfiguration. Which, by the way, in the Eastern Churches (in Eastern tradition), transfiguration is almost the (kind of) eastern equivalent of the Feast of the Holy Trinity, because they see this as a major feast day that points forward to the beatific vision, to the resurrection, when we'll see God. Not just any God, the triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), we will see God and see the face and the glory of Jesus Christ in his humanity. In a way, we will taste what Peter, James and John tasted for a moment on that mountain, but for all eternity.

In closing, you don't have to take my word for that. You can just listen to what the catechism says about the mystery of the transfiguration. There are two key paragraphs on the transfiguration in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that really helped me enter into this mystery more deeply. The first is from paragraph 2583 and this one is the catechism answer to why Moses and Eli'jah were on the mountain. Why not Adam and Eve, or David and Solomon, or any other (Abraham and Sarah), why these two figures? This is what the catechism says:

Elijah, like Moses before him, hides "in a cleft of the rock" until the mysterious presence of God has passed by. *But only on the mountain of the Transfiguration will Moses and Elijah behold the unveiled face of him whom they sought*; "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [shines] in the face of Christ," crucified and risen.

So that's from the catechism there, paragraph 2583. It's eluding to the fact that of all the people in the Old Testament, it was Moses and Eli'jah who went up Mt. Sinai and who experienced theophanies with a desire to see the face of God but they couldn't do it. Moses said "show me your glory", God said "You can't see my face". Eli'jah was in the cleft of the rock and he went out to encounter God in a still small voice but he had to wrap his cloak around his face, because he knew he couldn't see God and live. He wanted to see God but he couldn't. Well, the desire of their hearts to see the face of God (in the Old Testament) is now met on the mountain of transfiguration, because now, in the incarnation, God has a human face.

And then the second element from the catechism says this:

On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. *Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration," namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection....* The Transfigura-

tion gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body." But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God."

Paragraph 556 of the catechism; in other words, we will see the glory of Christ's face in the resurrection, but not apart from the cross. So, just as Peter, James and John have to go through the valley of Calvary, and Gethsemane, and the death of Jesus before they can see the glory of the resurrection, so too, we have to follow that path; we have to follow that journey on the way to Calvary, and then to Easter.