

## **SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT – B – OLPH 2012**

(Genesis 22:1-18; Romans 8:31-37; Mark 9:2-10)

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Every year at the beginning of Lent, the Church presents us first with the story of the **temptations of Jesus** in the desert and then with the passage recounting the **Transfiguration on Mount Tabor**. Let me begin with a little story.

A business man, in a great hurry after having successfully signed a lucrative deal and feeling very generous, throws a 5 dollar note into the cup of a seemingly homeless man selling flowers and rapidly continues on his way. Half a block down the street, he turns around and makes his way back to the poor flower seller. “I’m sorry” he says picking out his favorite flower. “In my haste I forgot to take my purchase. After all, you are a business man just like me. Your flowers are fairly priced and of good quality. I trust you won’t be upset with me forgetting to pick out my purchase.” With that he smiled and quickly went on his way again.

A few weeks later, while at lunch, a neatly dressed, handsome man approached the businessman’s table and introduced himself. “I’m sure you don’t remember me, and I don’t even know your name, but your face I will never forget. You are the man who inspired me to make something of myself. I was a vagrant selling flowers on a street corner and feeling sorry for myself until you gave me back my self-respect and a sense of dignity. Now **I** believe that I am a business man and I am good at it.”

This is a different story of transfiguration, a story of transformation. The encouragement of one person leads to the courage in another person to face up to life’s challenges and take charge of one’s actions and destiny.

In our Gospel story today Peter, James, and John join Jesus on a mountain. While they sojourn on the mountain top, a wondrous **transformation** takes place right before their eyes - Jesus’ body changes from an earthly body into a glorified body and he is joined by the two great leaders of the Old Testament - **Moses and Elijah** - the Lawgiver and the Prophet - and thus the old covenant meets the new covenant, the prefigured becomes the transfigured, the promised becomes the fulfilled.

A powerful moment! An exciting moment! A triumphant moment! What would be more natural than to hurry down the mountain and let all the world know what they had just experienced, but instead they fall down in fear until Jesus raises them up and helps them overcome their fear and then he says sternly: “Tell no one about this vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” Now some people might find this difficult because they have to immediately tell everyone where they were, what they saw, and whom they were with. Other people need to take time to let things silently sink in. It seems

from the gospels that it took time - especially for Peter - to grasp the full implication of this marvelous event and the caution Jesus issued to them.

Then when the time came to climb another mountain with Jesus, **Mount Calvary**, only one of the three in today's gospel passage had the courage to accompany Jesus on his final journey leading to the Cross. If Tabor is the Mount of the Transfiguration then Calvary is the Mount of the Disfiguration. We will hear the full story when we come to Good Friday. However, before Jesus will begin his ascent to Calvary, he again will take these three apostles aside in the garden on **Gethsemane**. This time they will fall asleep on him. As Jesus will face his captors, James will have disappeared into the night and John will stay unrecognized in the background. Jesus will be arrested and later that same night, Peter will be so filled with fear that he will deny even knowing Jesus, not only once but three times. Things change.

**But tides turn.** As Jesus had foretold them, the Son of Man is raised from the dead and many rise with him. At Easter Jesus again will appear in his glorified body, this time in the Upper Room. Once again he will say: **"Be not afraid."** And the disciples, after having received the gift of the Holy Spirit, will now rise from their fears. They will stand tall. They will be changed. They will be charged with new energy, with new life, with new vision. They will climb pulpits and platforms, they will proclaim Jesus as the Risen Lord. And they will tell the story of the Transfigured Son of Man and they will not be silenced.

They **found courage** where there was fear; they found strength where there was weakness; they cried out where there was silence! And like the apostles, many believers will find the courage to stand tall and be counted, to remain faithful and witness to the Lord – sometimes even unto shedding their blood. Their transformation, their transfiguration, made them saints and examples for men and women to proclaim the Good News.

Today, and every day, during the celebration of the Eucharist, we witness **a transformation**. We witness the change of the Eucharistic elements from bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Like the glorified body of Christ the elements are still recognizable as bread and wine but they now signify a different reality, they signify the presence of Christ. In this transformation – in theology we call it **Transubstantiation** – we get a glimpse of the glory of Christ which awaits us when we enter eternal life. In this Transubstantiation, Jesus is made present in our day and time. In this Transubstantiation Jesus gives us the courage to face our trials and resist the temptations of daily life. Jesus strengthens us in our discipleship, Jesus shows us the glory of God the Father.

Lent should become for us a time of transformation, a time of facing up to our innermost fears, a time to renew our trust in God, a time to allow Jesus to change us as He once changed the apostles. Today Jesus speaks to us: **Be not afraid! Go and proclaim the Good News!**