

Brothers and sisters,

Our lives are in constant flux, constant change. Our bodies continue to grow and adapt as we age, responding to the circumstances of life. Every medical setback is met with an attempt to heal, to make the most of the circumstances, conserving energy when necessary to fight another day. Another way to think of this is that we are always on one journey or another in life. The same is true of our spiritual journey. One of the most beautiful truths about discipleship is this: with Jesus, our life is always a journey. It is never stagnant. The Christian life is movement — a pilgrimage of holiness. God always adapts to meet us where we are and to give us precisely what we need at this moment to grow in holiness, which means growing closer to Him.

At the Transfiguration, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John on a journey up a high mountain. *He* takes them; the initiative belongs to Jesus, not to them. So often on our journey of discipleship, we want to take the lead. We want Jesus to follow us, rather than allowing Him to guide us on the path that He has chosen for us. The closest followers of Jesus do not climb on their own initiative. They are led. From the beginning, discipleship is not self-directed spirituality — it is following Someone. It is walking with Christ where He chooses to lead.

And where does He lead them? First, to the mountain of glory, where they witness the Transfiguration. Initially our journey with Jesus is attractive on some level, or we would never begin. Perhaps we are curious. Maybe we are tired of trying to do everything in life on our own. Our heart is attracted to the Gospel, because God promises us a better life. But we know the story does not end there. These same three apostles will later be taken by Jesus to the Mount of Olives, where they will witness His agony before the crucifixion. This reveals something essential about the Christian journey.

The glory of the Transfiguration and the suffering of the Cross belong together. The dazzling light on the mountain prepares the disciples for the darkness of Calvary. Jesus shows them His glory so that, when they see His suffering, they will not lose hope. Because the Cross — painful and terrible as it is — leads to salvation. It leads to future glory. Growth in our journey of discipleship always involves the Cross sooner or later, because our growth requires dying to our old ways of doing things, it requires us to place less stock in this world and the promises of this world. When worldly promises fail us we experience a cross, a death, so that we can rise to a better reality.

This is the heart of discipleship: to be with Jesus — in triumph and in tragedy, in consolation and in trial. Jesus does not promise us a life of uninterrupted mountaintop experiences. But He does promise His presence. He takes us with Him. Many of us would prefer to build tents like Peter. We want to stay on the mountain. We want to freeze the moments of clarity, peace, and spiritual warmth. But the Christian vocation is not about camping in comfort. It is about following in faith.

When Jesus was transfigured before His disciples, they were given a glimpse of the glorified future that awaits the faithful. What happened to Christ is not meant to remain His alone. Through the power of Jesus Christ, we too are meant to be transformed.

Lent reminds us that holiness is not automatic. It requires movement. It requires detachment. It requires saying no to what is passing so that we can cling to what is eternal. It requires the Cross.

Our Christian vocation constantly calls us to detach ourselves from the things of this world — not because creation is bad, but because it is passing. We cannot cling to what is temporary and expect to receive what is eternal. Pilgrims travel light. Disciples travel free.

On the mountain, the Father speaks from the cloud: “This is my beloved Son, my chosen one. Listen to Him.” That command is simple, but it is demanding. Listen to Him — when His teaching comforts us. Listen to Him — when His words challenge us. Listen to Him — when the road leads uphill. Listen to Him — when the path descends into the valley of the Cross.

In a noisy world, the voice of the Father is often drowned out. Lent invites us to carve out quiet spaces where the words of the Father can echo within us: “This is my beloved Son... Listen to Him.” If we stay close to Jesus — in prayer, in the sacraments, in daily fidelity — something remarkable begins to happen. His light begins to touch us. His goodness begins to reshape us. His glory begins, even now, to shine through us.

This is the promise of the Transfiguration: that through Christ, we can be transformed. Not instantly. Not easily. But truly.

Filled with His light, we begin to shine with His glory — first on this earth through lives of holiness, and one day fully in the world to come. So today the question is not: Do I understand everything about Christ? The real question is: Am I willing to go with Him? Up the mountain. Down into the valley. All the way to the Cross — and beyond it, into glory.

Amen.