

# “THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM”

## SUNDAY LENT 2 A

FOR FEBRUARY 28, 2021 – ST. PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH

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From his miraculous birth  
to his baptism—  
from the feeding of the five thousand  
to the empty tomb,  
everything we know about the life of Jesus  
is a sign of his identity and his mission.

Everything—  
his words and actions,  
his temptations, his suffering, his disciples,  
his parables, his miracles  
are all signs leading us to God.

Before he entered public life,  
Jesus was plunged into the waters of the Jordan.  
He had nothing to repent,  
no sins to wash away,  
no emptiness to be filled,  
no brokenness to be made whole.

But Jesus entered the water, anyway.  
He was baptized to open our eyes and hearts  
and show us that heaven has been torn apart for us.  
At the moment of his immersion,  
Jesus showed us the Father.

He was driven into the desert  
to be tempted by Satan.

He had no secret sins to overcome.  
But Jesus entered the desert, anyway,  
so, he could stand beside us in our weakness—  
sharing in our fears.

And today, in the midst of his public ministry,  
Jesus paused,  
and took three disciples to a mountain top.

He had nothing to prove,  
no crowds to impress,  
no agenda to fill.  
He ascended that mountain  
to show us the glory of the resurrection to come.  
At the moment of his transfiguration,  
Jesus showed us the Father.

Each year,  
during Lent, we are invited to  
to take this same journey--  
into the water, through the desert,  
up to the mountaintop,  
and on to Jerusalem, the cross, and finally  
the empty tomb.

Along the way,  
we search for water from deep wells.  
We fast and pray and stare down our own demons—  
Envy, greed, prejudice  
a lack of love, an excess of pride.  
But there are some years,  
when this Lenten journey feels longer,  
harder, more difficult somehow.

Some years,  
no matter which road we take,  
the path seems steeper.  
Some years,  
no matter where we stop,  
the wells look dry,  
and the wilderness is all we see.

Some years,  
the gratitude we want to name,  
the faith we long to express,  
the prayers we need to offer,  
the words we ought to say,  
remain silent, elusive,  
stuck deep in the back of our throats  
like ashes.

This year, especially,  
many of us struggle with grief and loss,  
isolation, fear.  
We are weary of pandemic and violence,  
wounded by arguing.  
Exhausted.  
Frozen.  
Fed up.

Some of us are stretched so thin,  
we feel almost invisible  
trying to make the ragged ends of one day  
meet the edges of the next.

Yet, each year,

early in this journey towards Easter,  
the Church pauses to proclaim  
the glory of the Transfiguration.

This week, and every week,  
we are invited to wash the grit from our eyes,  
brush the dust from our clothing,  
and go up onto the mountaintop  
to stand beside Peter and James and John.  
In that still, sacred space  
high above the clamor of the world,  
we are invited to see Jesus,  
dazzling, gleaming,  
transfigured into glory.

That moment is a preview—  
a foretaste of the heavenly glory  
that awaits all of us.  
In this moment, Jesus wasn't so much transformed,  
as he was revealed in His fullness.  
Revealed as the resurrected one.  
Revealed as the God made flesh.  
Revealed as our hope for eternity.

For the disciples,  
this experience was so unexpected,  
so overwhelming,  
that Peter wanted to stay on the mountaintop  
and bask in the light.  
He wasn't ready to turn his face toward Jerusalem  
and his feet toward the cross.

Peter didn't see,

just yet,  
that the path to freedom,  
the path to the Father,  
the path back to the glory he just witnessed,  
lies by way of the cross.  
He didn't understand,  
just yet,  
that the vision lighting the way to God,  
would take him to Calvary, first.

Like Peter and James and John,  
we are invited to contemplate the transfigured Christ  
and see the glory of the Risen Lord.  
In this vision,  
we see not only *His* glory,  
but the promise of our own.  
But like Peter, we can't linger there—  
not just yet,  
but we can return from the mountaintop  
to live with our eyes fixed on Christ  
and our hearts open to mystery.

We can see Christ,  
living, glorified, radiant,  
in everything we do--  
when we visit the sick or care for an elderly relative;  
when we pass on the faith or extend a hand to the poor,  
when we honor the dignity of life or find courage to forgive a wrong.

Having been to the mountaintop,  
we can live transformed.  
We can see Christ reflected  
in the work of our hands,

in joy of our love,  
in the beauty of the created world,  
in the water and the wilderness and the path we must walk.

Like Peter,  
we might want to stay in that space,  
saying, “It’s good that we are here!  
Let’s make three tents!”  
We might not be ready  
to turn our faces toward Jerusalem  
and our feet toward the cross.

But in the image of Christ,  
transfigured,  
we find the purpose  
and the courage to journey on.

For Jesus, for Peter, and for us,  
that road to Jerusalem is waiting.

- Based on a homily by Dr. Susan Fleming McGurgan - 2021