

March 2, 2025 – The Transfiguration of Our Lord -Luke 9:28-36- Pastor Ventura  
**We Still Sing, We Still Hope**

Dear friends in Christ

Grace and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the last couple of Sundays, we heard about the resurrection of the dead, and the promise of God to resurrect us for life everlasting, and how it moves us to give fruits while we wait for our full redemption.

And today we are encouraged to be continually grounded in the victory of Christ, for one day we will share in his full glory, even as Jesus tells us to walk in his ways in this difficult world.

Today we observe the transfiguration of Jesus, the day when he allowed his glory to be displayed even if it was for a moment, to his disciples. Those who were with him that day, in awe beheld Jesus full glory. But, at the end of what they were beholding, those disciples had to come down the mountain and into the valley to walk in Jesus' ways, and to carry their own crosses too just as Jesus did. Just as Jesus had told them he would do.

Our Gospel reading for today begins by saying: "Now about eight days after these sayings" (v 28). What sayings? Well, Luke says we need to understand some backstory to understand the transfiguration fully. And so, go back, in the text and find what was said then. Eight days earlier Jesus had said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected . . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (9:22). Then he added, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (9:23).

Those two statements are at the sayings that form the background of the Transfiguration of Jesus. The transfiguration happens because a cross will be taken up. That's not the only reason for the transfiguration though. But it's one reason. Before we enter Lent, before we remember how Jesus takes up his cross for us, before we rededicate ourselves to taking up our crosses as we follow him, the transfiguration teaches us who Jesus is and what he has waiting for us.

Now, people can have their own views on Jesus, who he is, what he does. But if we see him in the way God reveals it to us, then we will see him for who he is. For example, a soldier looks at Jesus hanging in agony on that cross, and he might think, "That's yet another criminal paying the price for what he's done wrong." But the transfiguration says, "Actually, that's God paying the price for what you've done wrong."

It's obvious Jesus is just as human as we are. Because he dies. Just like we will, unless Jesus returns first as we reflected on last Sunday. But the transfiguration

makes it clear Jesus isn't just a human. That day, his body glowed with glory that could only belong to God. It was an epiphany—a revelation that Jesus is God begotten of God and Light begotten of Light. God wants to make sure that Peter, James, John, you, and I all know that the one who will soon hang on a cross, Jesus, has the blood line to pay for our sins.

But Peter is in awe of what he sees there on the mountain top, and he wants to make the moment last. And so, he wants to build three tents. Jesus could have stayed on the mountain. He could have said, "I kind of like glowing with glory." I think my rating will go up! I'll stay here! But if Jesus had stayed on the mountain as Peter wanted, he would have been spared the cross. And we would have no forgiveness, no resurrection, no heaven, no hope. We would have a life filled with sorrow. And then a death filled with hell. But Jesus didn't come to this earth to put himself on glorious display. He came to put himself on a gory cross.

Now, what could Jesus, Moses, and Elijah be talking about at that moment? It is about Jesus' departure. That's his departure from life when he's crucified. Even when Jesus shines with glory as God, he is thinking about how he's going to accomplish your salvation.

As you see, Jesus has an undying love for you. No, correction, Jesus has a dying love for you. He plans to go to the cross, because he knows his death is the only way God's justice can be satisfied, the only way we unholy people can be made holy, the only way we can join him in glory.

You'd think that a dead criminal couldn't possibly be serving God. But the transfiguration shows that the dead criminal not only serves God; the dead criminal is God. Which means the price of your salvation is paid in full!

But Jesus is not the only one who will take up a cross. Jesus knows Peter, James, and John will take up their crosses as they follow Jesus. And so will you and I. Jesus takes up a cross literally. We take them up figuratively.

Jesus does not say, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him have an easy life and earthly riches." That's what false prophets teach—that you should expect prosperity on earth, riches and easy life. Well, as we learned heard last Sunday, Oscar Romero and Bonhoeffer, would disagree with that statement too. And that's because Jesus alerts us that we should expect resistance from the world—whether or not our heavenly Father grants you prosperity. "If anyone wants to come after me, let him take up his cross," he says. And the disciples indeed suffered. John suffered years in exile. Peter was executed. James lost his head courtesy of King Herod Agrippa. James was the first apostle to be martyred. Which is to say, James was the first apostle whose

soul got to share Jesus' transfiguration glory. And when Jesus returns, James' body as well as his soul will glow like Christ.

When you say you're a Christian, people may laugh because you still believe the Bible is true. When you resist temptation, your friends may think you're a prude. When you talk about your Lord, some people will consider you hopelessly out-of-date. When you take up your cross and follow Jesus, life isn't likely to be easy. Maybe you'll even have the privilege of dying for Jesus. I'm not sure what the twenty-first-century equivalent of Christians being thrown to the lions might be, but if you're asked to endure it, then remember the transfiguration. Because the glory that Jesus has on the mountain is glory you will share in too. And when you realize that's the glory he has waiting for you, you'll be ready to carry whatever cross may be laid on you.

Now, you might be asking "Why can't we skip the suffering and go straight to glory with Jesus?" For the same reason Jesus couldn't skip the cross. There are people on this earth who need him, and you and I are the way our Lord cares for those hurting people today. And you and I are the way he gets the message of sin and a Savior to all those people out there who don't realize that Jesus took up his cross for them. And even when we don't behold Jesus glowing glory down the valley, we must walk through it. But as you journey through the valley, count with the memory, the knowledge, the certainly that Jesus glowing glory is yours in him, even now, and fully at the resurrection.

And that alone will add to your delight in taking up your cross and move forward, yes, even when the world is against you.

Victor Heredia, and Argentinian song writer, wrote a song about 5 years his sister and brother-in-law were killed by Argentinian fascist government back in the 70s, even though grieving for them, he was still able to sing. The song he wrote is titled: "We Still Sing." Here are some verses of the song:

We still sing, we still ask  
We still dream, we still hope  
Despite the blows  
that happened in our lives

The genius of hate  
Banishing to oblivion  
our loved ones  
We still sing, we still ask  
We still dream, we still hope

Tell us where  
They have hidden the flowers  
that the streets smelled  
Chasing a destiny  
Where, where have they gone?

May they give us hope  
To know that it is possible  
Let the garden light up  
With laughter and singing  
Of those we love so much

If somebody who relays in human power to overcome pain in the world, imagine how much more Christian can do. There is no fear, there is no devil, there is nothing that can rob us of the joy we have in Christ.

So even when taking up our crosses, look around, somewhere, through something, through somebody, the glory of Christ, might be reflecting the glory of transfiguration. I know we usually focus on how bad the world is, and there is no denying of that. But we can still sing too, we can be the reflection of God's glory to others. We can be like the flowers Heredia is asking for. Look to your brother and sister in Christ, they might be just that to you, if you haven't realized that, maybe today is a good day to do so, and if you have realized that, then praise the Lord, praise him, because now you can help each other carry your crosses.

Peter would live roughly thirty-five years after the transfiguration—thirty-five very difficult years. But nothing that he experienced in all those years, no matter how horrible, could erase what he saw on that mountaintop. I don't know what you'll be asked to suffer in the future because you belong to Jesus, but nothing that you will experience as a Christian, no matter how horrible, can erase the promise God gave you when he baptized you into the death, the resurrection, and, might I add, the transfiguration of his Son. What the Father said about his Son he now says about you because of Jesus: "You are my child. My chosen one." Jesus' glory will be your glory.

And to make sure you know that promise is for you, so you can remain faithful until death, your Lord at this altar puts into you the same body that Peter, James, and John saw transfigured on that mountain, the same body that they saw hanging on the cross, the same body they saw alive on Easter evening in the Upper Room. Along with the blood that atoned for you.

Pay attention when the Father says, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him” (v 35). Listen to him when he says you must take up your cross to follow him. Listen to him when he says, “The Son of Man must suffer, be killed, and on the third day rise.” Listen to him when he says, “I forgive you all your sins.” Listen to him when he says, “This is my body given for you” and “This is my blood shed for you.” Listen to him when he says, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

When it gets difficult to carry your cross and live as God’s child—and it will be difficult—remember the transfiguration. It guarantees that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed. Jesus is transfigured because crosses will be taken up. The transfiguration tells you that when Jesus takes up his cross, that’s God dying to save you, so before you take up your cross to follow him, you know Jesus will share his glory with You, his transfiguration glory.

In his name, amen.