

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT – 16 MARCH 2025



COLLECT

O God, who have commanded us
to listen to your beloved Son,
be pleased, we pray,
to nourish us inwardly by your word,
that, with spiritual sight made pure,
we may rejoice to behold your glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Which do you enjoy most, Christmas or Easter? Christmas is certainly special: carols and decorations, family meals and gift-giving but, in terms of the story of Jesus, there is no doubt. The meaning of the incarnation is revealed at Easter. Jesus' birth, the words and actions of his ministry, all culminate on Calvary. Punished and crucified like a criminal because he will not shirk the challenge of proclaiming the reign of God, he is vindicated when God raises him to glory. Jesus' resurrection is the crown of the Paschal Mystery. The risen Lord, beyond time and place, is with us always.

Each time we celebrate the Eucharist we encounter Christ in his death and resurrection, but the greatest opportunity for us to be transformed and liberated is at Easter. Joined to Christ, we too die and rise. Each year, we embrace the risen Christ by affirming our baptismal promises. We say we are pleased to be one with Christ, part of his Body the Church. Today's story of the transfiguration gives us a glimpse of the triumph of the resurrection. For the disciples then and for us today, it is an encouragement. We see in Christ the destiny of all the baptised.

A reading from the book of Genesis
15:5–12, 17–18

Taking Abram outside the Lord said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

'I am the Lord' he said to him 'who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldaeans to make you heir to this land.' 'My Lord, the Lord' Abram replied 'how am I to know that I shall inherit it?' He said to him, 'Get me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon.' He brought him all these, cut them in half and put half on one side and half facing it on the other; but the birds he did not cut in half. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses but Abram drove them off.

Now as the sun was setting Abram fell into a deep sleep, and terror seized him. When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, there appeared a smoking furnace and a firebrand that went between the halves. That day the Lord made a Covenant with Abram in these terms:

'To your descendants I give this land,
from the wadi of Egypt to the Great River.'

Responsorial Psalm **Ps 26:1, 7–9, 13–14**

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink? **R.**

O Lord, hear my voice when I call;
have mercy and answer.

Of you my heart has spoken:
'Seek his face.' **R.**

It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face.

Dismiss not your servant in anger;
you have been my help. **R.**

I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.

Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.

Hope in the Lord! **R.**

First Reading

A covenant is a solemn agreement, a mutual pact. The covenant of the old law was: I will be your God and you will be my people. God looks after us and we live by God's law. In Christ, a new relationship with God is established for the human race by Jesus' death and resurrection.

In this strange and mysterious story, Abraham offers in sacrifice a heifer, a goat and a ram with a couple of birds. God receives the offering after sunset with smoke and fire, and Abraham 'knows' in a fearsome dream that a covenant has been established. The new covenant established by Christ is not sealed with the blood of animals but by the blood of the cross. *This is my body which will be given up for you... This is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be poured out for you...*

The glory of the resurrection is our promised land, our destiny and destination, if we are one with Christ.

Readers will need to convey this story with a certain breadth and grandeur to match the solemnity of the covenant being established. Check the pronunciation of unfamiliar words (Abram - an early form of Abraham's name, Chaldaeans and wadi, perhaps).

Responsorial Psalm

I will be your God and you will be my people.

Psalm 26/27 affirms the God of the covenant, both acclaiming that God is our protector and seeking God's presence and mercy. The acclamation is seen especially in the first and fourth stanzas, the petition in the middle stanzas.

The psalm is certainly an encouragement, as is the Transfiguration; likewise the psalm uses the symbol of light in the response and the first verse.

The 'face of the Lord' is an expression which speaks of the presence of God. We recognise people by their face. God's face is sometimes linked with shining light as, for example, when we pray for those who have died in Eucharistic Prayer II: *welcome them into the light of your face.*

**A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Philippians 3:17 – 4:1**

[My brothers, be united in following my rule of life. Take as your models everybody who is already doing this and study them as you used to study us. I have told you often, and I repeat it today with tears, there are many who are behaving as the enemies of the cross of Christ. They are destined to be lost. They make foods into their god and they are proudest of something they ought to think shameful; the things they think important are earthly things.] For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe.

So then, my brothers and dear friends, do not give way but remain faithful in the Lord. I miss you very much, dear friends; you are my joy and my crown.

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]

**A reading from the holy Gospel
according to Luke 9:28–36**

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' – He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him'. And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

Second Reading

The shorter version of this reading is known by many as a funeral reading. Our homeland, our destiny, is heaven where we will be transfigured to share in the glory of the risen Christ. This section relates directly to the story of the Transfiguration which follows in the gospel. Paul makes it clear that this is something we are all meant to share by the gracious power of Christ the saviour.

The first section of the reading which makes up the longer version is helpful in presenting the contrast – some think earthly things are the most important whereas, for us, our homeland is in heaven. However, the section is quite difficult to understand and may prove a distraction from the simpler and more direct presentation of our transformation in Christ.

Gospel

Just before the story of the Transfiguration in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus has spoken about disciples taking up their cross to follow him. Whoever wants to save their life will lose it; those who lose their life will save it. These references to Jesus' passion and death are followed by this astounding revelation of his resurrection to glory.

Like the story of Jesus' baptism, the transfiguration event is a revelation of who Jesus is. The disciples saw his glory in the brilliant shining light. The conversation with Moses and Elijah was about his passing which was to happen in Jerusalem, but the 'aspect of his face' changed... that is, he was present and manifested to them in a different way: no longer laying down his life on the cross, but now shown in his resurrection.

Peter was right. It was wonderful for them to be there. They catch a glimpse of the whole Paschal Mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. And so do we. It encourages us on our Lenten journey and spurs us on to the glory of Easter.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Prayer over the People (Second Sunday of Lent)

Bless your faithful, we pray, O Lord,
with a blessing that endures for ever,
and keep us faithful
to the Gospel of your Only Begotten Son,
so that we may always desire and at last attain
that glory whose beauty he showed in his own Body,
to the amazement of his Apostles.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.
Amen.

(Adapted from the Prayer over the People for the Second Sunday of Lent, Roman Missal p. 252)

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of Genesis 15:5–12, 17–18

The Lord brought Abram outside and said,
“Look toward heaven and count the stars,
if you are able to count them.”
Then the Lord said to him,
“So shall your descendants be.”
And Abram believed the Lord;
and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Then the Lord said to Abram,
“I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans,
to give you this land to possess.”

But Abram said,
“O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”

The Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old,
a female goat three years old,
a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”
Abram brought the Lord all these and cut them in two,
laying each half over against the other;
but he did not cut the birds in two.
And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses,
Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram,
and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.
When the sun had gone down and it was dark,
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 Euphrates.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (NRSV)

Psalm 27.1, 7-8, 9, 13-14 (R.1a)

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid? **R.**

Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
“Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!”
Your face, Lord, do I seek. **R.**

Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation! **R.**

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord; be strong,
and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! **R.**

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians 3:17 – 4:1

[Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me,
and observe those who live
according to the example you have in us.

For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ;
I have often told you of them,
and now I tell you even with tears.
Their end is destruction; their god is the belly;
and their glory is in their shame;
their minds are set on earthly things.]

But our citizenship is in heaven,
and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour,
the Lord Jesus Christ.
He will transform the body of our humiliation
that it may be conformed to the body of his glory,
by the power that also enables him
to make all things subject to himself.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters,
whom I love and long for,
my joy and crown,
stand firm, my beloved, in the Lord in this way.

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the gospel according to Luke 9:28–36

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James,
and went up on the mountain to pray.
And while he was praying,
the appearance of his face changed,
and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah,
talking to Jesus. They appeared in glory
and were speaking of his departure,
which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and his companions
were weighed down with sleep;
but since they had stayed awake,
they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

Just as Moses and Elijah were leaving Jesus,
Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here;
let us make three tents,
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."
Peter did not know what he was saying.

While Peter was saying this,
a cloud came and overshadowed them;
and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.
Then from the cloud came a voice that said,
"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"
When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

And the disciples kept silent and in those days
told no one any of the things they had seen.