



Deacon Steve Szmuto's Reflection on the Sunday Readings

March 17, 2019 – First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18 Psalms 27: 1, 7-14

Philippians 3: 17 — 4:1 Luke 9: 28b-36

To fully understand today's Gospel reading, Saint Luke's account of *The Transfiguration of the Lord*, it is important to place the scripture passage within the context

of Our Lord's journey to Jerusalem and his Paschal Mission. Earlier, in the 9th Chapter of Luke's Gospel, Jesus had challenged the disciples to declare who he truly was. Peter replied that Jesus was the Christ of God (the Messiah). In his first prediction of his Passion, following Peter's Declaration, Jesus told them that he would suffer, be rejected and killed – and on the third day, be raised. As this was likely a topic of great concern for the apostles, some eight days later, he took Peter, James and John up on the mountain to pray. *"While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem."*

Witnessing this moment of glory, this revelation of divinity, overwhelmed Peter, James and John. Peter could only say, *"Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."* He wanted to remain in the experience of the divine. At that moment, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and from within a voice said: *"This is my chosen Son; listen to him."* Although the three disciples did not mention it until after Christ had risen from the dead, all were deeply affected by this moment of revelation. It was a brief encounter with the Divine Christ, but one that the men would remember long after Jesus' passion, death and resurrection put all things into perspective.

The Transfiguration revealed the nature and identity of Jesus Christ, who is the Messiah and the fulfillment of God's Covenant with his people. That Covenant was expressed in the first reading from the Book of Genesis, where God took Abram (Abraham) outside and said to him: *"Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be."*

As we continue throughout the days of Lent, let us allow the image of the Transfiguration, which in a sense is seen in the Eucharist, to inspire us to follow the Lord with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all our minds. Although Jesus was fully human, he was also the Son of God, his divinity apparent from all eternity. Through worship of him, we will be saved, for by his sacrifice, he brought us salvation and reconciled us with Our Heavenly Father. As we heard in today's Psalm: *"The LORD is my light and salvation; whom should I fear? The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?"*

Deacon Steven Szmuto