

# LIVING THE GOSPEL

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Feb 28, 2010

1. What possible meanings does Jesus' dazzling white raiment convey?
2. What similar messages encouraging us to "listen to Him," are you aware of in Scripture? How can we enhance our ability to listen to Jesus?
3. What insight could this incident provide regarding the communion of the Saints?

### Closing Prayer

**All:** God of the resurrection, you clothed your Son in glory as he was praying. Help us to be faithful to prayer, and to one day share in the glory of eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen

**Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)**

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**The Navarre Bible – Commentaries;**  
**Living Liturgy – Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press;**  
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**Theme: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"**

### Gathering Prayer

**All:** God our Father, help us to hear your Son. Enlighten us with your word, that we may find the way to your glory. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

### Exploring the Word

#### **Gospel Reading: Luke 9:28-36**

<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" <sup>36</sup> And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

### **Gospel Notes**

**28-36** By his transfiguration Jesus strengthens his disciples' faith, revealing a trace of the glory his body will have after the Resurrection. He wants them to realize that his passion will not be the end but rather the route he will take to reach glorification. "For a person to go straight along the road, he must have some knowledge of the end—just as an archer will not shoot an arrow straight unless he first see the target [...]. This is particularly necessary if the road is hard and rough, the going heavy, and the end delightful" (St Thomas Aquinas, *Sunma theologiae*, q. 45, a.1)

Through the miracle of the Transfiguration Jesus shows one of the qualities of glorified bodies—brightness, "by which the bodies of the saints shall shine like the sun, according to the words of our Lord recorded in the Gospel of St Matthew: 'The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (Mt 13:43). To remove the possibility of doubt on the subject, he exemplifies this in his transfiguration. This quality the Apostle sometimes calls glory, sometimes brightness: 'He will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body' (Phil 3:21); and again, 'It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory' (1 Cor 15:43). Of this glory the Israelites beheld some image in the desert, when the face of Moses, after he had enjoyed the presence and conversation of God, shone with such luster that they could not look on it (Ex 34:29; 2 Cor 3:7). This brightness is a sort of radiance reflected by the body from the supreme happiness of the soul. It is a participation in that bliss which the soul enjoys [...]. This quality is not common to all in the same degree. All the bodies of the saints will be equally impassible; but the brightness of all will not be same, for, according to the Apostle, 'There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead' (1 Cor 15:4f)" (*St Pius V Catechism*, 1, 12 13). See also notes on Matthew 17:1-13; 17:5; 17:10-13; and Mark 9:2-10; 9:7)

**31** "And spoke of his departure": that is, his departure from this world, in other words his death. It can also be understood as meaning our Lord's Ascension.

**35** "Listen to him!" everything God wishes to say to mankind he has said through Christ, now that the fullness of time has come (cf Heb 1:1) "Therefore," St John of the Cross explains, "If any now should question God or desire a vision or revelation, not only will he be acting foolishly but he would be committing an offence against God, by not fixing his gaze on Christ with no desire for any new thing. For God could reply to him in this way: 'If I have spoken all things to you in my Word, which is my Son, and I have no other word, what answer can I give you now, or what can I reveal to you that is greater than this? Fix your eyes on him alone, for in him I have spoken and revealed to you all things, and in him you will find even more than what you ask for and desire [...]. Hear him, for I have no more faith to reveal, nor have I any more things to declare'" (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book 2, chap. 22,5)

"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Lk 9:34-35.) Finally, the cloud took Jesus out of the sight of the disciples on the day of his ascension and will reveal him as Son of man in glory on the day of his final coming. (Cf. Acts 1:9; cf. Lk 21:27.)

**1151** – *Signs taken up by Christ*. In his preaching the Lord Jesus often makes use of the signs of creation to make known the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. (Cf. Lk 8:10.) He performs healings and illustrates his preaching with physical signs or symbolic gestures. (Cf. Jn 9:6; Mk 7:33 ff.; 8:22 ff.) He gives new meaning to the deeds and signs of the Old Covenant, above all to the Exodus and the Passover, (Cf. Lk 9:31; 22:7-20.) for he himself is the meaning of all these signs.

**2583** After Elijah had learned mercy during his retreat at the Wadi Cherith, he teaches the widow of Zarephath to believe in The Word of God and confirms her faith by his urgent prayer: God brings the widow's child back to life.(Cf. 1 Kings 17:7-24)

The sacrifice on Mount Carmel is a decisive test for the faith of the People of God. In response to Elijah's plea, "Answer me, O LORD, answer me," the Lord's fire consumes the holocaust, at the time of the evening oblation. The Eastern liturgies repeat Elijah's plea in the Eucharistic *epiclesis*.

Finally, taking the desert road that leads to the place where the living and true God reveals himself to his people, Elijah, like Moses before him, hides "in a cleft of the rock" until the mysterious presence of God has passed by.(Cf. 1 Kings 19:1-14; cf. Ex 33:19-23) But only on the mountain of the Transfiguration will Moses and Elijah behold the unveiled face of him whom they sought; "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [shines] in the face of Christ," crucified and risen.(2 Cor 4:6; cf. Lk 9:30-35)

**2600** The Gospel according to St. Luke emphasizes the action of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of prayer in Christ's ministry. Jesus prays *before* the decisive moments of his mission: before his Father's witness to him during his baptism and Transfiguration, and before his own fulfillment of the Father's plan of love by his Passion.(Cf. Lk 3:21; 9:28; 22:41-44) He also prays before the decisive moments involving the mission of his apostles: at his election and call of the Twelve, before Peter's confession of him as "the Christ of God," and again that the faith of the chief of the Apostles may not fail when tempted.(Cf. Lk 6:12; 9:18-20; 22:32) Jesus' prayer before the events of salvation that the Father has asked him to fulfill is a humble and trusting commitment of his human will to the loving will of the Father.

## Sharing and Discussion

which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem".(Lk 9:31) A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"(Lk 9:35)

**556** On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection.(St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 45, 4, ad 2) From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body."(Phil 3:21) But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God":(Acts 14:22)

Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?"(St. Augustine, Sermo 78, 6: PL 38, 492-493; cf. Lk 9:33)

**659** "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."(Mk 16:19) Christ's body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys.(Cf Lk 24:31; Jn 20:19, 26) But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity.(Cf. Acts 1:3; 10:41; Mk 16:12; Lk 24:15; Jn 20:14-15; 21:4) Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand.(Cf. Acts 1:9; 2:33; 7:56; Lk 9:34-35; 24:51; Ex 13:22; Mk 16:19; Ps 110:1) Only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul "as to one untimely born", in a last apparition that established him as an apostle.(1 Cor 15:8; cf. 9:1; Gal 1:16)

**697** – *Cloud and light*. These two images occur together in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In the theophanies of the Old Testament, the cloud, now obscure, now luminous, reveals the living and saving God, while veiling the transcendence of his glory - with Moses on Mount Sinai, (Cf. Ex 24:15-18.) at the tent of meeting, (Cf. Ex 33:9-10.) and during the wandering in the desert, (Cf. Ex 40:36-38; 1 Cor 10:1-2) and with Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. (Cf. 1 Kings 8:10-12.) In the Holy Spirit, Christ fulfills these figures. The Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and "overshadows" her, so that she might conceive and give birth to Jesus. (Lk 1:35.) On the mountain of Transfiguration, the Spirit in the "cloud came and overshadowed" Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Peter, James and John, and "a voice came out of the cloud, saying,

## Gospel Reflection

Most of us live far too hectic lives—we are busy from morning to night with work, chauffeuring kids, cleaning, meals, answering e-mail, and a hundred other things. When we might finally sit down in the evening to relax a little, we often doze off while reading or watching a TV program. We might wake with a start when the book drops out of our hand, or wake up when a commercial comes on with its louder volume to find we've missed half the TV program. Peter, John, and James in this gospel must have been really tired after their climb up the mountain, for they fell asleep. Then they awaken to see Jesus' transfigured glory. How startling that must have been for them!

Luke's account of the transfiguration event is the only one that includes the necessity of the passion on the journey to glory ("his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem"). Peter awakens from sleep to see Jesus' glory and wants to stay there ("it is good that we are here; let us make three tents"). "But he did not know what he was saying." To share in the glory of Jesus, disciples must walk the journey of Jesus: offer their very lives for the sake of others. These three apostles were privileged to awaken from sleep to see Jesus' transfigured glory. But they clearly missed the most important point: this transfigured glory foreshadows his risen glory. Luke's insight is that glory always presupposes embracing passion.

Jesus' transfiguration—in all its glory cannot erase the stark reality of self-offering. Simply put, glory comes only through embracing the passion. This is the paradox of the paschal mystery: that something as desirable as a share in Jesus' transfigured glory only comes through our embracing something as demanding as dying to self for the good of others. Even in this glorious moment of transfiguration—which gives us encouragement and hope on our Lenten journey—we are reminded that the only way to remain in that glory is to die to self. We have to come down off the mountain and walk our own journey through death to glory.

## Living the Paschal Mystery

Baptism is our covenant with the Lord. Rather than animal offerings and "smoking fire pot and flaming torch" (first reading), the sign of our covenant with God is water, chrism, white garment, and lighted candle. Luke's allusions to Jesus' death in Jerusalem prompt an allusion to our being plunged into Jesus' dying and rising in the baptismal waters. We

are invited this Sunday to see our baptism in light of the transfiguration.

Baptism isn't simply a ritual we perform but a covenant with God that we live out the rest of our lives. During Lent as we walk with the elect through their final preparation for baptism we, too, prepare to renew our covenant with God at Easter. This means that we not only already share in God's life and look forward to that day when we will share eternal glory with God but we also embrace the suffering and death.

Let's face it: constant dying to self gets tiresome! This Sunday we are given a glimpse of glory to help ease the discouragement of a lifetime of self-emptying. This tells us something about how we might keep Sundays holy. If each Sunday were a day of rest, a time to be good to ourselves, to do something special that is uplifting, to enter into a moment of glory, we would be better fortified to continue dying to self.

### **Old and New Testament links**

#### **First Reading – Genesis 15:5-12,17-18**

<sup>5</sup> And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>6</sup> And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

<sup>7</sup> And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." <sup>8</sup> But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" <sup>9</sup> He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a she-goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> And he brought him all these, cut them in two, and laid each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram; and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him.... <sup>17</sup> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> 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 Reading – Psalm 27:1,7-9,13-14**

<sup>1</sup> 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?

<sup>7</sup> Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! <sup>8</sup> Thou hast said, "Seek ye my face." My heart says to thee, "Thy face, LORD, do I seek."

<sup>9</sup> Hide not thy face from me. Turn not thy servant away in anger, thou who hast been my help. Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation! ...

<sup>13</sup> I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! <sup>14</sup> Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the LORD!

#### **Second Reading – Philippians 3:17-4:1**

<sup>17</sup> Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

<sup>4:1</sup> Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

### **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**516** - Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is *Revelation* of the Father. Jesus can say: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father", and the Father can say: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (*Jn 14:9; Lk 9:35; cf. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7 ("my beloved Son").*) Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest "God's love. . . among us". (*1 Jn 4:9*)

**554** From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master "began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised." (*Mt 16:21*) Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he. (*Cf. Mt 16:22-23; 17:23; Lk 9:45*) In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain, (*Cf. Mt 17:1-8 and parallels; 2 Pt 1:16-18*) before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking "of his departure,