

Each year on the Second Sunday of Lent we hear the story of the Transfiguration. When we consider all three readings today we can understand why some have called this the “Sunday of the three mountains.” In the first reading from Genesis, we have Abraham on **Mt. Moriah**. St. Paul’s letter to the Romans in the second reading takes us to the redeeming Christ on **Mt. Calvary**. Finally, our gospel from Mark shows us the Transfiguration of Jesus on **Mt. Tabor**. In hearing these three readings today we are put into a position to ask ourselves an extremely important question: *“Which mountain am I going to climb this Lent?”*

Lent is a season that invites us to climb one of these mountains. Mountain climbing is hard, but when we get to the top we see things in a different way. The air is clearer, we can see a lot further, we seem closer to God and the effort to get there energizes us in a physical and spiritual way.

Let’s look at these three mountains.

First we see Mt. Moriah. Abraham is an old man. He never thought that he would ever have any children, but God blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son, Isaac, in their old age. Imagine the joy they felt with the miraculous birth of their son. Yet, now God has directed Abraham to take his son up Mt. Moriah to sacrifice him. This may seem odd to us in 2021 America, but it wasn’t so strange to the Chaldean people of the day. Archaeologists have discovered evidence that the Chaldeans practiced child sacrifice to their gods.

God’s call to Abraham to take his son up the mountain to be sacrificed was his way of showing in a very dramatic way that human sacrifice was not a part of the fidelity to the God of life. At the top of Mt. Moriah, God’s messenger stopped Abraham from carrying out the slaughter of his son. With this, Abraham finally and completely was able to leave the old gods of the Chaldeans behind and instead follow the true God.

The lesson of Mt. Moriah to all of us is that during Lent when we climb that mountain we can make the decision to abandon the devotion to the false gods of our culture. Those false gods of politics, Hollywood, sexual permissiveness, power, greed and selfishness that have directed our lives, can be left behind just as Abraham left the false gods of the Chaldeans. We will turn away from the support of the human sacrifice of abortion, euthanasia and blindness to the needs of the poor, homeless and hungry. The call of Mt. Moriah is to be in service to the true God alone.

In the second reading of St. Paul to the Romans we hear perhaps some of the most comforting words in scripture: ***“If God is for us, who can be against us?”*** God handed over his own Son for the eternal benefit of each and every one of us. We can look at the Crucifix and realize that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for all of mankind. Billions and billions of people who have lived have the opportunity to be beneficiaries of that most unselfish of acts. But what I am going to ask you to do is look at that Crucifix and say, *“You did this all for ME!”* If anyone of us had been the *only* person in the world, Jesus would still have been willing to do what you see on that cross. Take that cross and make it personal to you.

Our current culture in its greed or in such things as New Age practices does not see God as a personal being. Instead, at best, it reduces God to an impersonal cosmic energy for us to capture and use. It tells us that salvation is going to be found in techniques of self-fulfillment, self-realization and self-redemption. At worst, it tells us that God does not exist at all. Don’t be confused. *Our* salvation comes through the Paschal Mystery; the passion, death and

Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We learn from Jesus that new life can come from death and that there is light after darkness.

The call to us of Mt. Calvary is to embrace the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the key to our life.

Finally, we consider Mt. Tabor; the location of Transfiguration that revealed the power of the kingdom to Peter, James and John. Up to that point in Jesus' ministry, Peter, James and John saw things only in worldly terms. If you go back and read the passage of Mark immediately before the Transfiguration, you see that Jesus predicts his passion, death and Resurrection to Peter and the apostles. Peter, unable to understand the significance of what Jesus was saying, rebukes Jesus. Jesus responds that Peter is thinking in human terms rather than in God's terms. I invite you to go back and read Mark 8: 27-38.

However, in the Transfiguration Jesus has Peter, James and John climb Mt. Tabor and to get a glimpse of the power and glory of the Kingdom of God. There in the presence of Jesus, Moses (representing the Law) and Elijah (representing the Prophets), the voice of the Father proclaims from heaven, ***"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."***

While Peter, James and John did not fully understand all that had just happened, they realized that there was a whole lot more to their future than they had ever imagined. One day they, too, would shine. This world is *not* all there is for us.

The call of Mt. Tabor is that we need to trust in the glory that awaits us.

Three mountains – Mt. Moriah, Mt. Calvary, Mt. Tabor. Which one do we need to climb this Lent?

Do we need to climb Mt. Moriah like Abraham, leaving old gods behind so that we can serve the only one true God?

Perhaps we need to climb Mt. Calvary in order to realize that salvation only comes through Jesus Christ? Salvation is not going to be found solely on some intense self examination. We need to look to Jesus Christ.

Maybe we need to climb Mt. Tabor so that we truly understand and believe that the glory the apostles saw in Jesus at the Transfiguration will one day be ours. We need to realize that our faithful Christian life here is only the beginning of an eternal life of joy with Jesus.

Let's ask ourselves: *"Which mountain do I need to climb right now during Lent?"*

1. Mt. Moriah – leaving behind the gods of the past.
2. Mt. Calvary – embracing Christ as the only Savior.
3. Mt. Tabor – trusting the glory that will be ours in Christ.

Put on your hiking shoes and get ready to go climb your spiritual mountain. ***"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."***