

Homily  
Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord  
(18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in OT)  
August 6, 2023

There was a story about a couple who attended church regularly, religiously, every Sunday. They would arrive early, walk proudly to the front, take their place in the front pew, actively participate, then depart as they arrived, proudly exiting the church. All eyes would watch the couple as they conducted themselves so royally. One day, in the fall, on the first day of Standard Daylight Time, they again proudly walked to the front and took their place, only to hear the words, "Go in peace." They had arrived an hour late. Sadly, they never returned. They were too embarrassed to show their faces in that church again. Pride, when confronted with reality, often becomes embarrassment.

I have to remember on whose behalf I'm speaking when standing here at this ambo. In addition to proclaiming the Word of God, speaking the very words of Christ, I am also, at times, like right now, preaching in His name, trying in my weakened, fallen human nature, to take His Words and express a message for all of us to take with us when we leave here, especially me. And after Mass, I have the joy of greeting you as you also depart church to go about your business. Sometimes, some of you will comment on my homily. On those occasions when I'm blessed to be praised for my homily, I often say that first and foremost, I'm preaching to myself. I need to listen to and practice what I preach. And if anyone else gets something out of this, that's icing on the cake. It is when I'm confronted with my own pride that I am humbled, and sometimes even embarrassed.

Fr. Paul Scalia, son of the late Supreme Court Justice, Anton Scalia, presided and preached at his father's funeral Mass. He began by talking about the great man they were all gathered to honor, that this man was well known, well loved and is deserving of being upheld for his accomplishments. Then he said, "Of course, I'm talking about Jesus." It would have been easy to confuse his words of praise for his father, worthy as his father was for that praise, but the reality is that they were there and we are here first and foremost for Christ.

Daniel, in the first reading, describes the glory of God. He describes His clothing, His hair, His throne. He describes how He is ministered to by the myriads attending to him. Then, "One like a Son of man receiving dominion, glory and kingship. We would do well to show God the same honor.

In the second reading, Peter recounts how God spoke and we, "...will do well to be attentive to it." He goes on to describe God's Word, "...as a lamp shining in a dark place." Again, we would do well to be as attentive towards such a blazing light.

Peter, James and John were chosen to witness the Transfiguration, the glorification of our Lord. Peter was quick to suggest a course of action in that special moment. All of us have that potential to take action when confronted with the Glory of God. Then God speaks, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." No greater Words of Wisdom, "...listen to Him!"

Peter gives us so many examples of pride or fear or selfishness that we can relate to. His first and most humble, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." And when he tried to walk on water, successfully until taking his eyes off Jesus. And His greatest sin, when he denied Jesus, not once, but three times. How often can we relate to the same pride or selfishness or fear?

I struggle every day to remember that in everything I do and everything I say, I'm Christ for the world, to my wife, to my children, to my neighbor, to my brother deacons, and to you, the people of St. Paul Parish. And I am ashamed how often I find myself falling short, failing miserably in my pride, my selfishness, my fearfulness. But I keep trying, every day, in my prayers, in what I say and in what I do. I come to Mass as often as I can, not often enough; I go to confession, not often enough; I ask forgiveness, also not often enough.

We remain humble when we keep our focus on God. We are our best when we embrace God's greatest commandment, "Love God." This is our primary focus. It is when we keep our focus on God that we can then embrace the second greatest commandment and love our neighbor. We cannot adequately and successfully love our neighbor until we first love God. It is through our love for God that we are blessed and graced with the strength and courage to faithfully love our neighbor.

Yes, we kneel in reverence to our Lord and Savior, especially when He becomes present to us in the words of consecration. Yes, we bow in reverence when we approach and receive the God of the Universe, Who humbles Himself to be our food, our nourishment. Yes, we humble ourselves when we are dismissed to be Christ to the world. And we always strive to keep our focus on God, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."