

THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT - A

March 1 – 7, 2026

- Sun. The Second Sunday in Lent
March 1 **MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT OF THE TRANFIGURATION**
 From Rev. Judith Jones on *Working Preacher* website
- Mon. Monday of the Second Week in Lent
2 **THE HOPE TRUST GIVES US**
 A Reflection based on a text by Anselm Romb
- Tues. Memorial of St. Katharine Drexel
3 **WHAT ABOUT YOU**
 From the Homily of Pope Francis (Sept. 26, 2015)
- Wed. Wednesday of the Second Week in Lent
4 **ARE WE TRULY READY TO SHARE IN THE PASSION?**
 A Reflection adapted from a homily by St. John Chrysostom
- Thurs Thursday of the Second Week in Lent
5 **WILL GOD TREAT US AS WE HAVE TREATED OTHERS?**
 A Reflection developed from a text by Rev. Helmut Thielicke
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri. Friday of the Second Week in Lent
6 **MATTHEW 21:33ff**
 From a Commentary by J. Danielou, S.J.
- Sat. THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH
7 **PREACHING BY DEEDS**
 From a Reflection by St. Pope John XXIII

Sunday

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT OF THE TRANFIGURATION

From Rev. Judith Jones on *Working Preacher* website

The transfiguration marks the midpoint in a series of scenes that define who Jesus is. At both his baptism and transfiguration, the heavenly voice announces that he is God's son. At his temptation, in Gethsemane, and at his crucifixion, Jesus wrestles with the humiliation, suffering, and abandonment that he, as Son of God, must endure. Finally, the resurrected Jesus claims his identity, sending his disciples out to teach and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In the scenes leading up to the transfiguration, the disciples worship Jesus, who walks on water as the Son of God, but they cannot yet imagine what it means for Jesus to claim this title. Although Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, he utterly rejects Jesus' announcement that he will suffer and die. Jesus affirms Peter's insight but rejects his protest, calling him Satan for tempting the Son of God to define himself by glory but not by suffering. Furthermore, he calls Peter and anyone else who wants to be his disciple to follow him on the road that leads to the cross.

Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up onto a high mountain. There, he is transformed before them. His face shines like the sun, and his clothes become white as light (descriptions unique to Matthew). Moses and Elijah appear and talk to Jesus. As in Mark and Luke, Peter says, "It is good for us to be here," and suggests building tents for each of the three, but Matthew treats Peter differently here than the other Gospels do: Peter calls Jesus "Lord," the title that in Matthew indicates faith; he defers to Jesus' will ("if you wish"); he offers to undertake the construction of tents there alone ("I will build here"); and there is no indication at this point that he is afraid or does not know what he is saying.

The whole scene resonates with allusions to the Old Testament. It recalls Elijah's encounter with God on the holy mountain. It brings to mind the revelation at Mt. Sinai and the cloud of God's glory overshadowing both the mountain and the tent where Moses met with God. And it evokes Malachi 4, in which God commands the people to remember Moses' words and says that Elijah will be sent on a mission of restoration before the day of the Lord.

It is no wonder that the disciples are terrified by this theophany. As Malachi says, "Who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?" Then Jesus approaches his frightened followers, touches them, and tells them not to be afraid. Though they cannot bear to hear God speak from the cloud, they can listen to Jesus. The word of God comes to them now, not as a thunderous voice from heaven or letters written on tablets of stone, but in the words and actions of Jesus. The Son of God speaks to them as one human speaks to another, and they rise and follow him.

The story of the transfiguration directs us away from trying to understand Jesus only as he is revealed in glory. It points us down the mountain and invites us to walk with Jesus into the suffering, hungry crowds. The divine voice commands us to listen to Jesus. But listening is more than hearing. As Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, building on the rock means not only hearing his words, but acting on them. Hearing without obeying leads to catastrophe.

Monday

THE HOPE TRUST GIVES US

A Reflection based on a text by Anselm Romb

Something like twenty-three centuries ago, someone wrote the prayer which is the substance of the first reading at today's Eucharist. A Jew, living in exile in Babylon, and suffering all sorts of difficulties and trials, as a result, confesses that God knows how to bring great good out of suffering, including that of the entire Jewish community of faith. Think of all that Christians around the world, and the Church as a community, are suffering right now. Then pray this prayer.

Do you see the good that God is going to bring to all concerned out of what seems only tragedy today? None of us can say we do. But are we willing to hope, simply because we trust in God and God's love as revealed to us in Jesus' life, death and resurrection? If you can do this for the tragic events you read or hear about daily, can you accept the same hope for the sad events and tragedies that happen to you and those you love? This is the kind of trust Jesus wants to give us. He learned it – as the Letter to the Hebrews tells us – “through suffering”.

The Sacred Scriptures go on to tell us that Jesus counted all he suffered as unimportant in comparison to what was to come. But it comes only if one is justified in one's hope in God. We have to hope as Jesus did! When we stand before God to be judged, no angel will come forward with a tape measure to see how much we have developed our brain capacity, how much religious and biblical knowledge we have. No angel will put that tape around our physical or spiritual muscles to see how much we have achieved for God and God's Church. What the angel will do is measure the largeness of our hearts – how they have grown in trust and hope, and compassionate and thankful love.

Jesus orders, in today's Gospel, not to condemn but to be compassionate. Many waste time “condemning” God for allowing so much suffering; better to spend that time like Jesus, loving those who need help here and now. Do we dare to hope that God is transforming not only our hearts but our world by showing us Jesus as he exercised compassion for the people of his time and place? We can hope so if we are willing to walk in the same trusting hope Jesus did when he did deeds of mercy and kindness and healing.

We heard the prophet Daniel admit all the wrong things that Israel, as God's own people, had done. They had brought upon themselves disasters and all sorts of suffering. The exile (e.g.) was due to political machinations gone wrong; i.e., to trusting in self rather than God. Look what happened! Our opportunity to turn and return to God is today! Hope in God. God knows the way to abundant life, even from what seems a hopeless starting point. God has made a “merciful covenant” with us, a covenant of hope! Working together, the promise of that covenant will be ours and the entire world's.

Tuesday

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

From the Homily of Pope Francis at the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, Philadelphia (Sept. 26, 2015)

Most of you know the story of Saint Katharine Drexel, one of the great saints raised up by this local Church. When she spoke to Pope Leo XIII of the needs of the missions, the Pope - he was a very wise Pope! - asked her pointedly: "What about you? What are you going to do?" Those words changed Katharine's life because they reminded her that, in the end, every Christian man and woman, by virtue of baptism, has received a mission. Each one of us has to respond, as best we can, to the Lord's call to build up his Body, the Church.

"What about you?" I would like to dwell on two aspects of these words in the context of our particular mission to transmit the joy of the Gospel and to build up the Church, whether as priests, deacons, or members of institutes of consecrated life.

First, those words - "What about you?" - were addressed to a young person, a young woman with high ideals, and they changed her life. They made her think of the immense work that had to be done and to realize that she was being called to do her part. How many young people in our parishes and schools have the same high ideals, generosity of spirit, and love for Christ and the Church! Do we challenge them? Do we make space for them and help them to do their part? To find ways of sharing their enthusiasm and gifts with our communities, above all in works of mercy and concern for others? Do we share our own joy and enthusiasm in serving the Lord?

One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church's mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in our world. This will require creativity in adapting to changed situations, carrying forward the legacy of the past not primarily by maintaining our structures and institutions, which have served us well, but above all by being open to the possibilities which the Spirit opens up to us and communicating the joy of the Gospel, daily and in every season of our life.

"What about you?" Significantly, that those words of the elderly Pope were also addressed to a lay woman. We know that the future of the Church in a rapidly changing society will call, and even now calls, for a much more active engagement on the part of the laity. The Church in the United States has always devoted immense effort to the work of catechesis and education. Our challenge today is to build on those solid foundations and to foster a sense of collaboration and shared responsibility in planning for the future of our parishes and institutions. This does not mean relinquishing the spiritual authority with which we have been entrusted; rather, it means discerning and employing wisely the manifold gifts which the Spirit pours out upon the Church. In a particular way, it means valuing the immense contribution which women, lay and religious, have made and continue to make, to the life of our communities.

Wednesday

ARE WE TRULY READY TO SHARE IN THE PASSION?

A Reflection adapted from a homily by St. John Chrysostom

The Sons of Zebedee thought they had to be devious in asking Christ for the two most powerful positions in the government of the Messianic Kingdom. *“Command that we may sit, one at your right hand and the other at your left.”* As the psalm says, with the devious, the Lord is devious. Of course, the Lord is also wholly honest. *“You don’t know what you are asking for!”* he tells them. Those who are greatest in the Kingdom are those who have given themselves most completely in service of others. Speaking indirectly, perhaps so as not to frighten them away, Jesus asks whether they are willing to drink the cup he will drink and be baptized in the way he will be.

James and John were thinking of power and prestige, but Jesus could only think of hardships and service, of struggles and sweat. What do we think of when we imagine our life in God’s Kingdom? Do we think clearly and carefully about the struggles and sweat it will cost us even to enter that Kingdom? James and John thought that with the Lord’s resurrection, the Kingdom would come, and in the way most Jews of their time imagined. It would be an earthly Kingdom with God’s commands enforced strictly. For those in charge, under God and Jesus, there would be rewards and honors. These are what they wanted. But Jesus thinks of the Kingdom differently. Just as he will die for us, so many will die for the sake of that Kingdom before all struggle ends.

Notice how Jesus corrects and draws James and John to seek to share what he is about to undergo. If they can drink the cup, they can shed their blood, and if they can share Jesus’ baptism, they can give their lives as he is about to do. He is not speaking only to James and John but to us as well. We have our eyes fixed on rewards, and what our Lord and Savior sees is the self-sacrifice that makes us capable of living those rewards.

God is love and utter self-giving. We are to become as God is. Without understanding, perhaps any better than they did, we will reply as they did. Yes, we are willing to drink Jesus’ cup and be baptized as he was. Haven’t we said this? Yet it’s easy to talk about *“dying with Christ,”* but that doesn’t make it easy to do. Jesus treats martyrdom as a blessing and itself a kind of reward. Is that how we think of it? As for the positions, they don’t involve the sort of power or prestige James and his brother imagined. God will show them what it is really like to have a *“high”* place in the Kingdom. He will show us as well. We must not look away when he describes it.

When the other special disciples of Jesus heard about this conversation, they were immediately jealous. They didn’t understand. They all thought that prestige in the Kingdom was a competitive matter; and if someone is raised up, someone else is put down. That isn’t the way things work with God. Jesus went to the cross, died, and was raised up. What they expected didn’t happen. James’s high position in the Jerusalem church only made him die for Christ the sooner. Is that a special grace? Jesus speaks to all of us, inviting us to long for every suffering that can advance the coming of the Kingdom. Now it’s our turn.

Thursday

WILL GOD TREAT US AS WE HAVE TREATED OTHERS?

A Reflection developed from a text by Rev. Helmut Thielicke

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple and feasted magnificently every day, and at his gate lay a poor man, covered with sores.” The mercy of God is boundless, but it is not offered without expectations. We live by the grace of God and the merit of Christ, but one day comes finality, period. What if God then treats you as you have treated others? How have you treated those who, like Lazarus, needed your help? Have you ignored them? Then, when they are in Abraham’s bosom, they will not be able to come and help you.

The hour of God’s mercy will pass, and how will you be found when it does? The merciless Rich Man is in hell, and he feels something like love for his five brothers. But he can’t do anything about it any longer. The brothers carry on, living as he did without reflecting that their eternal destiny is at stake. It is a torment to have to imagine his brothers with him in hell. But the dead can’t warn the living, though they could before they died.

Are we like the young people who won’t listen to their elders and so ignore one another’s needs? Am I one of the five brothers? Do I imagine a messenger will come from the beyond to confirm the truth of what I read in Scripture? The Rich Man was reminded that the Scriptures are there for his brothers, but how can he get them to pay attention to them and take them seriously? He can’t, once he has died. Yet if one returned from the dead, wouldn’t they just think they were hallucinating? Besides, God isn’t a shock therapist. God loves you and waits patiently for the free gift of your heart.

So we can’t look for one to appear to us from the dead. There will be no voice from heaven, no kind of miracles to force us to believe. We – you and I – have only the Word of God, that word made flesh and crucified. It is an almost nameless and quiet Word, and it came in one who was as poor and despised as any brother or sister of ours, like Lazarus. In Jesus, God truly wants to be our brother and sister, and that’s why there is no brass band to march before him and rivet our attention on his message. He is one of the despised and ignored.

Jesus wants to show us the despised and ignored, and those treated unjustly and deprived not only of rights but of even basic human respect. He calls us to love and help them. What you do to the least noticed, you do to me. And the hour when we will have to answer for what we have failed to do is coming and cannot be avoided. How are you preparing?

Friday

MATTHEW 21:33ff

From a Commentary by J. Danielou, S.J.

“Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, fenced it in, dug a winepress in it, built a watchtower, and then leased it to tenants and went abroad.” From the time of Moses to that of Solomon, the vine of Israel grew until it spread from the Lebanon to Egypt, and from the Jordan to the sea. That is the way God honors promises.

God’s hopes were all set upon this vine, that it should bear grapes. This is the key signature of the Song of the Vine. Its theme turns wholly upon the hope that God has in human beings, the mystery of the divine expectations, primarily Israel’s expected response. Israel was the vine of the Lord’s planting, and God looked to have grapes from it; but besides this, all humankind is involved. The vine of Israel is a symbol for each one of us.

The entire drama of sacred history is in the contrast of human unbelief and God’s fidelity. Just how far the chosen people would go in ingratitude is shown by St. Matthew in the parable of the wicked tenants. After waiting patiently for two thousand years, God at length sent the Son, in person, to save the vine at any cost. God thinks, “At least they will respect my Son”. But now, after all God’s disappointments throughout Sacred History, here is the crowning disappointment of them all.

Where the prophets had failed, Christ himself was to fail. God’s patience has been strained to its farthest limit in this tragedy of Christ, the Lord of the vineyard’s own Son. The Son is rejected by the tenants, crucified, treated as a stranger, and cast out by God’s own people. But from these lowest depths arises a sudden hope. God will let out the vineyard to other tenants, and they will pay what is due in the proper time.

The tragedy of Good Friday, when Israel rejected the One, who was sent in God’s plan, becomes the means whereby the vine planted in Israel will break out in a new and vigorous growth. In fact, it was to bring forth for the first time the fruit expected of it. Now, through the passion and resurrection of Christ, the true and faithful vine bears fruit. “I am the vine, you are its branches; if you live in me and I in you, then you will yield abundant fruit; separated from me, you have no power to do anything”.

The whole burden of the story of the chosen people was that humans are powerless to achieve for themselves the result that God expects of them. The purpose of the story is to deepen human desire and longing for the true vine. Then the true vine appeared, in the person of Jesus Christ. The grace of God bears its plenitude of fruit in Jesus. God can rest forever from his labors, now that human nature is bringing forth this incomparable harvest of holiness. The response that the people of Israel had never been able to give is now given in perfection by God in the humanity of Jesus Christ. All God’s pleasure is in Jesus Christ – the everlasting vine, the eternal source of satisfaction. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus offers to share this with us. Follow Jesus. Become like Jesus.

Saturday

THE UNSUSPECTED POWER OF HUMILITY

A Reflection taken from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

O happy the humility of those who repent! O blessed the hope of those who confess! How mighty you are if you are with the Almighty! How quickly the dread judge is revealed as a devoted Father. Think of the prodigal son. By merely intending to humble himself he obtained a pardon that some seek with tears and strive for by confession.

Scripture proclaims: "I will confess my transgression to the Lord and you forgive the guilt of my sin"! Everywhere mercy triumphs. It preceded the very will to confess by inspiring it and then preceded the words of confession by forgiving all. When the prodigal was far off the Father ran to meet him. The Father was more anxious to pardon than the son was to be pardoned.

Where sin abounded, grace abounded more. Not only is their forgiveness but the sinner is given the sanctification of the Spirit—the "best robe". The Father breathed himself into the sinner's heart that the two might become one spirit. God couldn't bind us more closely, couldn't make us more intimate with Him, than by incorporating us into himself. By charity and by ineffable power God unites us with himself. If such is the grace accorded to the repentant what will be the glory of those who reign with Jesus? God gives us so much while we are still on the way, so what treasures is he keeping in store for us in the Kingdom?

You blessed sinner—blessed not because a sinner but because of repentance! The human heart is too narrow. The love it experiences must be expressed in groans, sighs and tears. When you consider all this what comes to birth in your mind and heart? An inexpressible fire of love blazes up. It comes of shame and sorrow and of joy and love all together. O happy sinner, keep carefully and watchfully this spirit. Keep the humility that brought you to your God. There is no greater gift of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing more health-restoring among the sacraments. Keep the humility by which you planned to say, "Father, I am not worthy!" This justifies sinners, perfects the just and brings justice to fullness.

Mercy has welcomed you with kindness, revived you with love and fear has been taken away. Hold fast to humility! You have chosen to be of little account and so you have been advanced beyond your imaginings. Always take the last place, or at least desire to. Humility is the greatest of all virtues, although it doesn't look upon itself as a virtue. It is the root and seed-bed, the tinder and incentive of all love. From it begin discipline and loving service of others. From it all other virtues begin and through it they make progress and in it, they are perfected and preserved. It is humility that makes all the virtues what they are, and if any are lacking it is humility that compensates. In it, you find salvation and love and joy beyond your dreams. Rejoice in the lowliness of your service because it exalts you without your becoming exalted. If you cling to it you have the most marvelous of God's gift, saving only the gift of God's very self.