

The Second Sunday of Lent is usually called “Transfiguration Sunday” because the story of the Transfiguration we just heard in the Gospel is always proclaimed during Mass on this particular Sunday during Lent. However, I think it may be more fitting to call today “Wake-Up Call Sunday”.

The events relayed by Saint Luke in today’s Gospel reading were literally a wake-up call for Peter, James, and John. They had been asleep. We’re told that Jesus took them up the mountain to pray, but then moments later it says that Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep. It shouldn’t be surprising. This phenomena was nothing unusual for the apostles. They spent a remarkable amount of time asleep, afraid, oblivious, blind, or hidden away. All too often, Jesus had to wake them up, open their eyes, calm their fears, and bring them out of hiding.

By the time Peter, James, and John went up the mountain to pray with Jesus, they had already seen Him heal the sick and cast devils into the sea. They had heard unclean spirits shriek at Jesus’ voice and watched a paralytic simply pick up his pallet and walk away. They had seen Jesus walk on water and turn water into wine. They had even found themselves eating with sinners, laughing with tax collectors, and talking to lepers, prostitutes, and thieves.

They had left their comfortable lives and set out on an adventure of a lifetime. Eight days earlier, the Holy Spirit had moved Peter to declare Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”. And yet, despite all this, when they followed Jesus up that mountain, they still fell asleep.

Today’s readings also serve as a wake-up call for us. Just like those apostles, we seem to spend a remarkable amount of time asleep. We spend so much of our lives afraid, oblivious, blind, and hidden away – hiding from a God who loves us. We’ve heard the Good News of Jesus and know that He conquers death at Easter. Yet, we too still fall asleep.

And if the Gospel doesn't awaken us from our spiritual slumber, our second reading from Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians certainly should. He says something that's easy to miss if we're not paying attention but it should make the hairs on the back of our necks stand up. He says, "Many conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction." He goes on to say, "Their minds are occupied with earthly things."

You might think that when he speaks of "enemies of the cross of Christ" that he's talking about outright enemies – adversaries or hostile forces organized against Jesus and His mission. But he's not. Saint Paul has in mind a much subtler enemy influence that stubbornly clings to the old Jewish ways of food laws and circumcision. All these Old Law things were superseded by Christ. These men and women that Saint Paul describes as "enemies" of Jesus' new way of the cross, wouldn't let go of the past.

Unfortunately, this same description can be extended to us here today. We can unwittingly and unconsciously conduct ourselves as if we were, in fact, enemies of the cross of Christ. And for some of the same reasons. We can become so locked into traditional ways of thinking and acting that we close ourselves off to the new. We can effectively stifle the Holy Spirit.

"Their God," says Saint Paul, "is in their stomach." Sometimes our stomachs and appetites control our better selves. "Their minds are occupied with earthly things," wrote Saint Paul. We know that problem too. We forget that our citizenship is in Heaven and we put earthbound values on a pedestal. As a result, we behave arrogantly and immodestly as if we want only the people on earth to take notice of us. At times, there's little space in our lives for the values of the cross and thus we inadvertently become "enemies of the cross of Christ".

When we snap back at someone; when we cover up our own shortcomings by criticizing others; when we damage another's reputation; when we respond to criticism with anger, to advice with insult, to the truth about ourselves with scorn for the bearer of that truth, we are showing ourselves to be an enemy of the cross of Christ. These actions stem from values that are too much of an occupation with earthly things.

We're surrounded by challenges that make it hard for us to be faithful to Christ and his Church. The normal behavior of our culture doesn't follow the Christian pattern of dignified self-control, selfless love, humility, and moral integrity. Instead, it exalts self-indulgence, exaggerated individualism, superficiality, and moral weakness – just like the pagan society of Philippi to which Saint Paul was writing. In so many small and subtle ways, any one of us can show ourselves to be an enemy of the cross of Christ. The realization of this possibility should be an alarming wake-up call for us.

During this time of transformation during the season of Lent, Jesus wants to wake us up and open our eyes to show us His glory, just like he did for those apostles on the mountaintop. He wants to calm our fears and bring us out of hiding. He wants to remind us that our citizenship is in Heaven. Just as Olympic athletes have to keep the gold medal in mind in order to endure the sacrifice necessary to train effectively, we have to keep our true home in mind in order to persevere through life's trials. If we remember that our citizenship is in Heaven, we won't expect life on earth to perfectly satisfy all our longings and desires. We won't become slaves to the seductive pleasures and trappings of this passing world.

The story of the Transfiguration gives us a glimpse of what Christ's glorified body is like. Before His Resurrection, Jesus' body was just like ours, subject to hunger and thirst, pain and

pleasure, weakness and strength. But after the Resurrection, Christ's body was glorified, transfigured by His divine nature. And God will do the same for us. That's our true destiny.

The eternal life God has promised to those who love Him isn't merely some sort of spiritual existence. It will include our material bodies, but bodies very different from what we have now. More than that we don't know. What really matters is how our faith in the Resurrection affects what we do in our lives today and how we treat each other in the here and now.

Brothers and sisters, we must carry on with courage in our Lenten preparation for the celebration of the Easter victory. Lent is a time of transformation. We've been given both a glimpse into the future that God has planned for us and a wake-up call for the present. Let's answer our wake-up call with hope and trust in the Lord. If we don't, we might oversleep and not be ready when Jesus comes again in glory.