

LENT SUNDAY TWO 2026: TIME FOR A TRANSFORMATION!

As usual, the season of Lent seems to be rushing by and we are already at the Second Sunday of the Lenten season. If you have not yet got into gear with regards to Lent, it is still not too late! Our Gospel today is always from that special event in Jesus' life and ministry called "The Transfiguration." Jesus takes his closest disciples up a mountain and there he is *transfigured* in their sight. Jesus' beauty and glory as the Son of God shines out from him. Soon, of course, we will see Jesus *disfigured* during his suffering and passion (think of Palm Sunday or Good Friday). But, for now, he reveals to his disciples clearly who he is as the Son of God. As St. Leo the Great puts it beautifully, "on the mountain, our Lord gave his disciples a spoon of honey to help sweeten the bitterness of his coming passion."

Lent, of course, is very much about *our* transfiguration and of turning away from all that disfigures us spiritually. Traditionally, to help with this crucial journey of transformation, we have three main pillars or actions: prayer, acts of charity and fasting. We noted in our reflection last week that these are three wonderful antidotes to all that takes us away from God. Incidentally, it is not that we only do these three actions during Lent (well, hopefully!), but rather we renew and refresh these and live them with a greater focus and intensity. Furthermore, we should aim to develop good spiritual habits in these three areas during Lent, so that we can then continue once Easter and the rest of the year comes. At this stage of our holy season, a few words or reminders about each of these pillars of Lent might be of help...

PRAYER:

Lent is a time when we can focus or refocus on prayer. Hopefully, we do take time to pray. After all, it is so essential for us. We are made to pray! If we do not eat properly or keep hydrated, then our bodies soon get sick and decline. So too with prayer. If we do not pray then our spirit quickly gets sick and withers, and our relationship with God fades away. Prayer is not always easy, but we should not think that we cannot pray. Saint Francis de Sales famously wrote that everyone can pray, because, he said, "so long as they are capable of grace, they are also capable of prayer." He went on to say: "it is only the devil who is incapable of prayer, because he alone is incapable of love." Of course, we want to make sure that we devote some extra time to prayer, but it is not only a matter of quantity. Lents is a special opportunity to ensure that the quality of our prayer grows and develops too.

ACTS OF CHARITY:

"Mercy is the showpiece of the soul" St. Augustine reminds us; but *how* can we be merciful? Mercy is a very practical and real thing and not just some nice concept or idea. There are so many ways that we can respond to the mercy that we have received by showing mercy to others. In our Christian tradition there are two main ways that we can do this: what are called the *corporal* and

the *spiritual* works of mercy (they are based on the Final Judgment in Mathew's Gospel, chapter 25: "Lord, when did we see you...?"). The corporal works of mercy are: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, ransoming captives (think of human trafficking for example) and burying the dead. The spiritual works of mercy are: instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful, admonishing the sinner, gladly forgiving injuries, bearing wrongs patiently and praying for living and the dead. A great question to ask at the end of each day in this holy season is, how have I shown mercy today? We might also look to see how we have received mercy too and so grow in our appreciation of God's mercy towards us.

FASTING:

Fasting can take many forms. There is the obvious way of fasting: of not eating certain foods or not eating at certain times. But fasting can also occur in other ways. We could, for example, try fasting from the computer, or the ever-present and life-dominating smart phone. We might also practice fasting from negative things such as gossip, envy or anger. Fasting is therefore quite a challenge! It is worth recalling that fasting is, in a way, a means to an end. We fast so as to remember that we should not have our lives controlled by certain things or appetites. It also helps us to be mindful of those who do not have even the basic necessities of life. Furthermore, fasting is a great reminder that all we have and are is not actually ours; but rather that it is a gift from God.

May this Lent be for all of us, a time of true transfiguration and transformation, especially through the practice of prayer, fasting and acts of charity!

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