

Father O'Connor's Homily for 13 March 2022
Second Sunday of Lent-C

Genesis 15: 5-12, 17-18
Philippians 3: 17-4: 1
Luke 9: 28b-36

Here are some items to note about this Second Week of Lent:

There will not be a Mass this Tuesday morning, 15 March, at Nativity.

A powerful way the Lord shows us His mercy and compassion is in the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation or Confession.

We celebrate the Sacrament of Penance here at Saint Joseph every Saturday morning from 11:00 until 12:00 Noon. And every Thursday evening after the 7:00 PM Mass until 8:30 PM.

On this coming Wednesday evening, March 16th, we will have our annual diocesan-wide "Evening of Confession" in every parish with a resident priest from 5:00 to 8:00 PM. What a gift! I encourage everyone to celebrate this great sacrament of the Lord's mercy and compassion during this season of Lent. I will be available in my reconciliation room at Saint Joseph on Wednesday evening.

This Friday and Saturday evenings, 18-19 March, at 7:30 PM we will be hosting productions of "Compassion the Musical" here in Saint Joseph Church.

In music and drama, it portrays the compassion of Jesus as seen through the eyes of Saint Peter who was in prison, awaiting his own martyrdom. Saint Peter remembers scenes, being played on the stage below, of Jesus showing compassion to the poor and the sick, to children and to sinners.

So many of you were here four years ago [2018] to see "Compassion the Musical" and I know you would like to see it again. Or maybe you heard about it and would like to see it. So please encourage your families and friends to come. It is free and open to people of all ages.

I remember seeing a brightly-colored artwork on an easel, and there were people standing around looking at it. There were some symbols on it that I didn't understand and some patterns that I didn't grasp.

One of the observers said, “I see Him!” and another said, “I see Him too!” Somebody else said, “I don’t see anything – it looks like a piece of modern art to me, and I really don’t like that stuff.”

I asked what was going on, and a woman said, “It’s a hologram, a 3-D picture, and you have to look at it very intently and from the right angle, and in the right light, and then you will see the image.”

I looked, and I looked, and I didn’t see anything. Then all of a sudden I adjusted my angle, it caught the light just a little differently, and I saw Him. It was the face of Jesus.

That experience reminds me of today’s Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent about the Transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus took Peter, James and John up that mountain and His face changed in appearance and His clothes became dazzling white. Moses and Elijah stood either side of Him.

Peter, James and John had been with Jesus for some time now. But they never saw Him like this before. He sometimes spoke using symbols that they didn’t understand. They had seen the pattern of His living, but they didn’t grasp it. And now here He was, displayed in His glory for them to see.

What took them so long? Well, there is a key in this Gospel. It says that “Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw His glory.” That gives us a key to our question: why don’t we see more of Jesus?

Sometimes it is because we are asleep – and we are not ready to notice His presence. When our minds are shut down, nothing gets in.

And then there is the noise, the commotion, the messages coming at us all the time – electronically and otherwise – that can also make us sleepy because of information overload.

Sometimes we do this to ourselves. Our culture tells us that we should devote all our energy and drive to being successful. Not that our dreams are all bad, but when we give *all* of ourselves to advancing *ourselves*, we can be blind to people around us – their dreams, their needs and how we can help.

Lent offers us the graced opportunity to step back with prayerful attention, and do what God the Father said we should do at that Mount of the Transfiguration: “This is my chosen Son. Listen to Him.”

There was a photojournalist by the name of Kevin Carter. In 1993 he was in Sudan and was doing a photo story about the starving people who were coming to the United Nations Food Center for assistance.

He took a break and went out into the open bush country. He heard a very high-pitched sound, and he followed it. The sound took him to a little girl who was ill and starving. She had her head bowed. It took all in her power to try to get to that food center.

Kevin Carter took out his camera. There was the girl, making her way, inch by inch, to the food center. Then a vulture, larger than the girl, landed behind her, waiting for her death and for another meal for itself.

“What an opportunity!” Kevin Carter thought. He took some twenty minutes to photograph that girl and that vulture behind her. When he got done he shooed the vulture away, packed up his equipment, and left the girl all by herself.

Back in the camp, he sat under a tree reflecting on the day. Then he thought of his own little girl back home, whose name was Meghan. He wanted to be with her at that moment and hug her. And he began to cry.

In March of 1993 his photograph of that starving girl and the vulture behind her appeared in the New York Times. It created a lot of controversy. There was a famine in Sudan, and here was someone that Kevin Carter photographed, but did not help. He had allowed his profession to blind him to what he might have done to help her.

In April of 1994 Kevin Carter received a Pulitzer Prize for that photo. In July, three months later, Kevin Carter took his own life at the age of 33.

That is a sad story, but it serves almost as a parable about today’s Gospel of the Transfiguration. It is possible for any of us to get so absorbed in our own plans that we can be sleepy and blind to the people around us that really need our help.

Sometimes it’s important to just let our plans go for a bit and embrace a spouse, or hug a child, help a friend, befriend a stranger, even help someone who is hungry to get some food.

“Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw His glory.”

And we can get glimpses of that glory too by taking regular prayerful time – like going to Confession or coming to “Compassion the Musical” this week – and do what God the Father said we should do at that Mount of the Transfiguration: “This is my chosen Son. Listen to Him.”