

FEBRUARY 28, 2021 – SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Dear Parishioners:

This is an old story. An unknown American missionary went to China to spread the gospel. However, a fatal epidemic broke out there and many Chinese people have died. He was a medical missionary and had some medical knowledge, but he was helpless. After much distress, he hurried to the United States with infectious virus in a vial in order to make a vaccine for it. He was about to land at the port of San Francisco, but the quarantine staff searched the passengers thoroughly. He thought that if he got caught, all his efforts would be in vain. So, after some anguish, he swallowed the virus and threw away the vial. As the virus spread all over his body, fever started to develop. He rushed to the hospital and told the doctors what had happened. Sadly, he eventually died, and in return for his sacrifice, a vaccine against the virus was made, which have saved the lives of countless Chinese people.

Like this missionary, Jesus laid down His life to save mankind. It was a voluntary sacrifice based on his love for it.

The reason Jesus manifested His glorious Transfiguration to the three disciples is to show that He is true God and His death on the cross is completely voluntary. He had the power to avoid or reject it, but he didn't exercise it. In other words, he confirmed that his gruesome death on the cross was not due to his powerlessness. "So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant" (Mark 9:10). Before the Transfiguration, Jesus has already spoken about His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, but they didn't understand it. Luke the evangelist said that they

did not understand it because “its meaning was hidden from them” (Luke 9:45). But there was another reason.

The Jews at that time believed that the Messiah would never die. That is why the disciples did not understand when Jesus spoke about his suffering and death. The same is the reason why Judas Iscariot sold Jesus to the Jewish leaders. He thought that Jesus would get out of their snare as he always had done because He could never die. Judas believed he would only keep the money after all. That's why Jesus didn't show all of His disciples His glorious appearance. He had a concern that, if his disciples saw his Transfiguration, they would interpret his story of suffering and death as just symbolic.

Given these facts, we need to remind ourselves that we, who hear the story of the glorious Transfiguration, must go through a process of suffering and death in order to participate in the glory of Jesus. The life of resurrection, which we will attain after suffering and death, provides hope and comfort to us, and motivates us to continue to voluntarily deny ourselves and take up our cross.

Moses and Elijah in the Transfiguration story symbolize the Law and the Prophets, but at the same time they represent the resurrected life. Moses could not enter the promised land because he died prior to the Jewish people's entering the promised land (Deuteronomy 32:52). But he enters the promised land as a living person by accompanying Jesus' Transfiguration. He reached the promised land many years after his death. Through death, we too will enter the promised land, i.e., heavenly paradise. This is the life of resurrection. Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind (2Kings 2:11) without suffering death. So, he symbolizes the resurrected life, which is eternal. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he

dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). Moses died, but he entered the promised land as a living person, and Elijah never died and is enjoying eternal happiness.

Lent is a time of repentance, mortification, sacrifice, and penance. These are acts that entail pain and suffering. We are celebrating the second Sunday of Lent. This is the point where it is easy for us to get loose. Once again, let us renew our resolution and voluntarily participate in the suffering and death of Jesus. Then we will also enjoy the victory of Jesus' resurrection.

Fr. Don Bosco Park