

**Second Sunday in Lent**  
**February 25, 2018**

To climb a mountain is a very exhilarating experience. It takes hard work and perseverance and sometimes it is very risky. But when you get to the top you feel like you're on top of the world. You can see forever. Today both the first reading and the gospel take place on a mountaintop. The transfiguration of our Lord is the clearest example in the New Testament of a mystical experience.

It has been said that we are a nation of mystics. There is a fascination about the spiritual. There is a keen conviction that the spiritual realm is far greater and more beautiful than the life we know. Stories about near-death experiences abound.

I suspect that the motivation behind drug abusers is the deep desire for a mystical experience. We have all had moments of enlightenment, moments when we connect to the life within. In these days of the winter Olympics there is a very vivid example of how the fire within makes all the difference. At that level of competition it is the difference between winning and losing. Vince Lombardi always talked about it. He called it the fire in the belly.

In my life as a priest I see it all the time. The absolute strong evidence that the spiritual realm is what makes us tick. Enhance your spirit and you enhance your entire life. Neglect the spiritual and you are neglecting your entire being, letting your life erode away.

Last week we had a wonderful presentation by one of our CCD teachers, Ken Hilgers. All of our confirmation candidates and their parents were there to hear Ken trace the history of our salvation, beginning with Adam and Eve to Pentecost with every Bible story in between. I could see in the eyes and body language of the students, even the parents, how they drifted in and out of connection to the story being told. When connected, it was truly uplifting.

It's not easy to climb the mountain. It's not easy to delve into our spirit. There is always something else that we want to do or have to do to meet life's demands. All of the noise of life, of running here and there often serves to mask our spiritual hunger. No wonder then that we find ourselves bored or empty or discouraged or at least disappointed with life. The restlessness within our heart

is nothing more than our soul crying out to feed me. Our hungry spirit groans to be ignited and fired up.

Even the apostles didn't get it. We are in good company with our spiritual struggle. During this time of Lent let us join the apostles, and Abraham and Isaac, and all the biblical figures in between to be transfigured. Strive for the greater gifts. To do so changes our life. To not do so is deadly dull. Practically speaking, your religion is the story you tell about your life.

What we are talking about is not some vague abstraction. We are not talking about some distant entity called the force. We are, in fact, talking about our personal God who knows us by name and knows and loves every hair on our head. When we talk about the spiritual we often lapse into perhaps, poetic talk. We are reluctant to speak because there are no words. We tell stories, stories from the Bible. This is not mystical whimsy or fascination with the paranormal.

This Lent, get down on your knees and with all the human strength that you can muster, and with the grace of God, connect your soul to the soul of God and be transfigured.