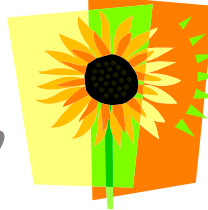




**THE TRANSFIGURATION — Genesis 15: 5-12,17-18; Psalm 27: 1,7-9,13-14; Philippians 3: 17-4:1; Luke 9: 28-36**

## ***This is my chosen son, listen to him!***



Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

### **REFLECTION:**

Who can forget the “bargain” that Abraham tried to make with God when he interceded on behalf of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah?

That was pretty bold of him, wasn't it?

Think, too, about how David, Job, Isaiah, and Paul all communicated with the Lord. And we all know about Mary's conversation with the angel Gabriel. In fact, the more you look at

the Bible, the more stories you find about ordinary human beings actually speaking with—and hearing from—Almighty God. It's on almost every page of Scripture!

All of these divine encounters are summed up and capped off by the story of Jesus' Transfiguration. If none of the other stories in the Bible convinces us, perhaps this amazing event can help us believe that communication with heaven really is possible.

The story of Jesus' Transfiguration prompts us to ask a key question: Does my experience at Mass, in prayer, or while reading Scripture, include being influenced by Jesus? Does it include the promise that I can hear from heaven and be changed by what I hear? We may

not know exactly what it feels like when Jesus is speaking to us, but there are a few signs we can be on the lookout for.

Perhaps you feel a desire in your heart to praise Jesus and thank him for his love. Perhaps you experience a growing hatred of sin and the way it separates you from the peace of Christ. You may feel a great sense of happiness, peace, or joy—especially after receiving the Eucharist. Or possibly you will find yourself moved to show greater love for

your family. Or maybe you will experience a growing desire to serve the Lord, whether in your parish or in your community. Don't discount these feelings! Jesus works in many ways, and the more we respond to him, the more confident we will be in his love.

***“Jesus, I trust that you hear my prayers, and so I will keep coming to you. Lord, I trust you to give me the wisdom and grace to live a life pleasing to you.”***



**The Transfiguration**  
by Carl Heinrich Bloch



**Monday, Mar 1**

*Daniel 9:4-10; Psalm 79:8-9,11,13; Luke 6:36-38*

Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. (Luke 6:38) Most toddlers have no trouble learning the meaning of “mine.” They do, however, need to be taught how to share! At first, youngsters may share only if made to by their parents. But as children mature, they begin to get the point that if they want to have any friends at all, they need to be flexible.

Unfortunately, the childish concept of “mine” often lingers into adult life. That’s why

Jesus spent so much time teaching and modeling for us another way—a way of selfless giving. In sermon after sermon, Jesus told us that the more we empty ourselves and give to other people, the more room we have to receive the good things that God has in store for us. And his store-room will never run out, for he is a God of infinite resources!

God’s gifts can range from wisdom, discernment, patience, and evangelization. They can be as practical as helping us handle a mini-crisis in our family or being able to hold on to our faith when inconvenient things happen.

If we give God just a bit of room in our hearts, he will respond by pouring immense amounts of grace into us. Take the Eucharist for example: So much is contained there, so many gifts, and we have only to show up to receive it! As St. Thérèse of Lisieux once said: “You must open a little ... so that the Bread of Angels may come as

divine dew to strengthen you, and to give you all that is wanting to you.”

So look up to heaven today and fix your eyes on the Lord. Watch to see what gifts he pours into your life. Know, too, that the more you use and share those gifts, the more he will give to you. Look around; do you see a need in your family? Your church? Your community? God can help you meet that need by filling what is lacking in you. It’s not about trying hard but about receiving all that he has to offer us.

***“Merciful Father, I open my heart and receive all that you generously offer me. Help me be both a giver and a receiver of your goodness.”***

**Tues, Mar 2**

*Isaiah 1:10,16-20; Psalm 50:8-9,16-17,21,23; Matthew 23:1-12*

Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord. (Isaiah 1:18)

As God looked at the people of Jerusalem, he saw rebelliousness, injustice, hardness of heart, and the desolation that such attitudes bring upon any people. Moved by what he saw, he called the prophet Isaiah to speak his heart’s cry:

“Let us set things right!”

Come and be cleansed, he pleaded; come and receive healing, restoration, freedom.

Let us set things right! This was the refrain even when Adam and Eve disobeyed.

God did not give them up to sin. Instead, he quickly promised them salvation. And from that moment on, in human suffering and war, in rejection of the Lord and rebellion, in exile and slavery,

God’s call remained constant. Return to me. Allow me to

remove the walls that separate us. Let me forgive and wash you clean.

God’s desire remains the same today! In fact, you don’t have to wait for a special time to reconcile with the Lord. You can come to him every day and “set things right.” All you need to do is take time each evening to review your day and seek the Lord’s forgiveness for any sins you may have committed. Before you go to bed, reflect on your thoughts and actions that day and bring to the Lord any ways in which you have missed the mark. And if something serious comes up, you can tell the Lord about it and make sure you get to Confession as soon as possible. It is so freeing to “clear the decks” every evening. It can even help you get a good night’s sleep!

There’s no time like the present to start. Quiet your heart, and listen closely. You will hear the Lord calling you, urging you: “Come, let us set things right!”

We think that Lent is all about our turning back to the Lord in repentance. But Lent is also about God reaching out to us, offering us a torrent of healing love and merciful grace. It’s about God doing everything in his power to “set things right” with us. Remember this when you examine your conscience: God is seeking after you, and he is ready to work miracles in your life!

***“Father, I stand in wonder at your willingness to welcome your people home! Even when I fall, you stand with arms outstretched, welcoming me back. Lord, your love truly is amazing!”***

***Pray unceasingly!***

**Wed, Mar 3**

*Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31:5-6,14-16 Matthew 20:17-28*

God has a plan for each of us.

Have you tried to discover what it is for you? In collusion with their mother, James and John tried to suggest to Jesus what their lives should look like—with royal thrones and seats of honor next to the Lord. But Jesus had a different idea for them. Rather than be recognized and served as “important” people in the kingdom, they were to become servants, following his example by laying down their lives for the gospel.

Today’s Gospel reading makes it clear that James and John had yet to develop the heart of a servant. Jesus had just revealed that he would suffer and die for others, while these two men showed that they were out for themselves. Earlier in Matthew’s Gospel, we read how Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him for predicting his own death and resurrection (Matthew 16:22). Like James and John, it seems that Peter had his own plan.

Of course, the apostles were not bad men. In fact, they served Jesus diligently throughout his public ministry. But there is a difference between serving a person or a cause and becoming a servant.

A servant is always on duty, always thinking about how to build up the church and bring glory to the Lord. By contrast, serving is something we can turn on and off, as a sort of break from our “normal” lives. It wasn’t until after Jesus’ resurrection—after Jesus returned to heaven and left the church in their hands—that the apostles began thinking and acting like servants.

Jesus doesn't expect any of us to be serving him one hundred percent of the time, but he does want to see us take up the heart of a servant. He wants us to become like dedicated parents whose children are always in their hearts, even when they are at work or enjoying a little downtime. A servant never stops thinking about God's people, never stops caring about the need to evangelize or the state of the church. All this because Jesus has captured his heart, and he wants nothing more than to give back to the Lord for everything he has done.

***“Lord, I love you, and I am in awe of your love for me. By your grace, change my heart. Lord, I want to become your servant!”***

### Thurs, Mar 4

*Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1:1-4,6; Luke 16:19-31*

He is like a barren bush in the desert that ... stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth. (Jeremiah 17:6) Poetically, Jeremiah says that the man who fails to trust in God is stuck in a place with “no change of seasons.”

While we may complain about summer heat or winter snow, fall leaf-raking and spring mud, most of us enjoy the changing seasons. We love the brilliant colors of autumn and welcome the first snowfall that transforms a dingy landscape. Most of all at this time of year, we look for the first crocus poking through the ground and the light green of tightly curled new leaves. It's no accident that the word “Lent” means “spring,” the promise of new life transforming the death

we experience or even cause. How about our spiritual life? Are we like that “barren bush in the desert”? Perhaps we're stuck in the way we've always done things. Every year we give up the same vices for Lent but return to them when it's over. Maybe we add pious practices but can't wait to resume life as usual on Easter Monday. We may feel trapped by our possessions or our responsibilities, and cannot see our way clear to deepen our relationship with the Lord.

If we trusted God more, how might he empower us to try something new? Maybe this year God is inviting us to add something to our Lenten observance, like a new way of praying or developing a new relationship. Maybe we've always done extra things like going to daily Mass or saying the whole rosary, but this year God is inviting us to carve out time simply to sit before him in silent listening. Maybe instead of saying, “I'll pray for you,” God is emboldening us to say, “Can I pray with you right now?”

Maybe it's time to move into a new season of our lives—from the spontaneity of childhood to the enthusiasm of youth, from the diligent work of middle age to the reflective wisdom of retirement. Remember that God won't lead you anywhere he isn't waiting to meet you! Ask him to reveal the next step in your journey together.

***“God of wisdom, you have been our dwelling place from age to age. You never change, yet you are always new. Help me to open my heart to the new way you want to manifest your love in me this Lent.”***

### Friday, Mar 5

*Gen 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28; Psalm 105:16-21; Matt 21:33-43, 45-46*

The Hebrew Scriptures are rich with stories and characters that foreshadow Jesus and the salvation he came to bring.

Take the story of Joseph, for instance. Joseph was the beloved of his father Jacob; Jesus is God's beloved Son. Out of jealousy, Joseph's brothers plotted to kill him, just as some of Jesus' fellow Jews conspired to kill him. Both were betrayed by those closest to them: Joseph's brothers sold him for twenty pieces of silver, while one of Jesus' closest disciples received thirty pieces of silver for leading the authorities to him.

Both men were a blessing to those around them. Joseph stored up grain to protect the people from famine, and Jesus fed five thousand people with a few loaves and fishes. When

Joseph's brothers come to Egypt in search of grain, Joseph reveals himself to them at the last minute, and they reconcile. Similarly, after the resurrection, Jesus showed the apostles that he was the heavenly Lord—even to the point of passing through walls and disappearing in an instant.

Both Joseph and Jesus went from being suffering servants to saviors of their people. Joseph preserved the children of Israel from famine, while Jesus saved all his people from sin and death.

But despite all their similarities, Joseph was not Jesus. Joseph was “the dreamer”—a somewhat pushy little brother who tended to get on his brothers' nerves. But despite the impudence of his youth, he tried to stay close to the Lord during his odyssey in Egypt. And as a result, the Lord purified him



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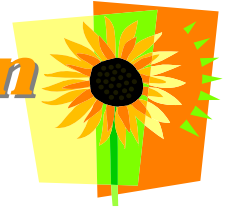
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more and more—to the point where, twenty years after he was able to forgive them and treat them with love, generosity, and respect. Joseph's story is our story too. Despite our weaknesses, we too can become ever more purified by the Lord and ever more like him. We can learn to forgive more easily. We can learn to love more deeply. And we can learn to serve more readily.

***“Jesus, I stand in awe of your transforming power.***

***I am open to being changed by you, to becoming more and more like you. . .”***

# Haiti and the Theodicy Question



*“It was on that occasion that the LORD made a covenant with Abram “. . . (Gn 15:18a)*

**Saturday, March 6**

*Micah 7:14-15,18-20; Psalm 103:1-4,9-12; Luke 15:1-3,11-32*

While he was still a long way off . . . (Luke 15:20)

The prodigal son took the father’s money and squandered it all. He had nothing to show for it but the ravages of his self-indulgence and extravagant wastefulness. Most likely, he was dressed in rags, filthy, and emaciated. He had no way to clean up, no way to repay his father, and nowhere else to go.

And so he approached his father’s house, cautiously and terribly aware of his offenses against his father.

It only makes sense that he would be nervous and fearful about how his father would receive him. The boy was “still a long way off” when the father sighted him. Evidently, the father had been on the lookout for any sign of him. And as soon as he saw

the boy, he ran to greet him. Try to imagine the scene: a well-to-do landowner, probably very well dressed, running with arms extended to embrace a dirty, ragged young man hunched over with weariness and hunger. Imagine this dignified man hugging the boy, showering him with kisses, and calling for rings, robes, and a feast. Without a single word of reproach, he accepted his son’s repentance and celebrated his return: My son is alive! He’s back! What a moving image of how our heavenly Father treats us! He always keeps his eye out for us. He is unfazed by our condition. The rags and filth that might cover us don’t fluster him. He isn’t just waiting for us to come to him, keeping a cool demeanor until he hears just the right tone of sorrow or remorse. No, he runs toward us! He longs to embrace us, to treat us with mercy, and to rejoice at our return. It doesn’t matter where we’ve been or what we’ve done. All that matters is that we’ve come home.

It can be easy to dismiss these images as a romantic fable of repentance and forgiveness. But Jesus wasn’t a starry-eyed dreamer or a spinner of fairy tales. He spoke divine truth. Your heavenly Father really does love you this much. He never holds your sins against you. He is always eagerly waiting for you to turn to him more deeply. Even now, he is running toward you, longing to put his arms around you and welcome you home.

***“Father, I trust in your kindness and mercy. Thank you for opening your arms and welcoming me home!”***

Where is God in the countless tragedies that happen in our world? Where is God when bad things happen to good people? Where was God during the Holocaust?

These are timeless questions and, taken together, constitute what is often called the theodicy question, the question of God and human suffering.

Every so often this question hits us with a particular poignancy, as it did last week with the earthquake in Haiti. Somewhere between a quarter of a million and half a million people are dead, thousands are injured, hundreds of thousands are homeless, thousands more now face the possibility of disease from lack of proper water, food, housing, and hygiene, its capital city has been almost completely destroyed, and virtually everyone in the country has lost loved ones. And all of this happened to one of the poorest nations in the world - and to a people who have a deep faith in God.

Where is God in all this? How does one find a faith perspective within which to understand this? Not easily.

When we search scripture for answers, we find that neither the Jewish scriptures nor Jesus try to tackle the question philosophically, namely, in the type of way that Christian and Jewish apologetic writers have tried to answer it. Scripture and Jesus, instead, do two things: First, they place suffering and tragedy into a larger perspective within which God is understood more as redeeming suffering rather than as rescuing us from it. Second, they assure us that God is with us, a fellow-sufferer, in any tragedy.

For example, anyone who follows the daily readings for the church’s liturgy, cannot not have noticed, that on the very day after the earthquake, there was a haunting parallel between what happened in Haiti and what was described in that day’s Epistle taken from the Book of Samuel. Here is an excerpt from the Epistle for the liturgy the day after the earthquake:

So the people went to Shiloh, and brought with them the arc of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant. When the ark of the covenant of the Lord was brought into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the whole earth resounded. . . . [And with that faith and confidence, Israel marched into battle, but] . . . Israel was defeated, and everyone fled, each to his own house. There was a great slaughter and thirty thousand of her foot-soldiers fell. The arc of the covenant was captured; and the two sons of Eli died.

One doesn’t have to strain the imagination to write a haunting parallel:

So the people Haiti practiced their Christian faith with piety and confidence. They went to their churches, received the Eucharist, and lit vigil candles to their God. And they trusted that their God would protect them. But there came a great earthquake. Hundreds of thousands of its people died, its great buildings were all leveled, all its churches were destroyed, its beloved cathedral fell to the ground, and the Archbishop was killed.

So where was God in all of this?

The Book of Samuel doesn’t try to write an apologetics to explain what happened that day when a people who had just celebrated its faith and confidence in God were utterly crushed in battle. It doesn’t try to explain where God was when this happened. It simply continues to tell its story and, eventually, we see how God redeems a tragedy from which he didn’t rescue its victims. It also makes clear that God was with the people of Israel, even as they were being routed.

Jesus gives us essentially the same perspective: When his friend, Lazarus, lay dying, he didn’t rush to his side to rescue him. He waited until Lazarus was dead and only then went to his home. He was met there by the sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, who each asked him the painful question: Where

**IN EXILE**

**BY RON ROLHEISER**

## *I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

### **Reading I: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18**

This reading combines three different themes: YHWH's promise of an abundant posterity to Abraham; his promise of the land to Israel; and the sealing of that promise with a covenant ceremony.

The Book of Genesis contains several stories of God's establishment of his covenant with Abraham, all of them variants of the same tradition.

In Abraham, God decisively intervened in human history to create a people for himself. God's choice is, on his side, a sheer act of grace; and faith is set, be it noted, not in the context of individual salvation, but in the context of a people's history.

This is the context in which the Old Testament views *sola gratia, sola fide*.

The apostle Paul discerned the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in the Christ-event and in the emergence of the new Israel, the Church (Gal 3; Rom 4).

### **Responsorial Psalm: 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14**

This psalm serves as a link between the first

were you when our brother was dying? Why didn't you come and cure him?

Jesus, for his part, doesn't meet their question head-on. Instead he simply asks: "Where have you put him?" They answer: "Come, we'll show you!" They take him to the grave and when Jesus sees the tomb and drinks in their grief, he sits down and begins to cry. He enters and shares their grief. Only afterwards does he raise up the body of his dead friend.

Where was God when the earthquake hit Haiti?

He was weeping with its people, grieving outside its mass graves, sitting in sadness beside its collapsed buildings. He was there, though he provided no Hollywood or Superman-type rescue. Moreover we can be sure he will redeem what was lost. In God's time, eventually, not a single life or single dream that died in Haiti will remain unredeemed. In the end, all will be well and all will be well and every manner of being will be well.

two readings. The fourth stanza begins with the words: "I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!"

For Abraham this land was *eretz Israel*, the territory that his descendants were destined to occupy. For Christian believers this land is the kingdom of God, the "commonwealth of heaven" of which the second reading speaks.

### **Reading II: Philippians 3:17-4:1**

Both the second reading and the gospel speak of a "change." The second reading speaks of the change of our earthly existence in the final consummation; the gospel speaks of the change of Jesus as he prayed on the holy mountain.

The term "glorious body," like the term "spiritual body," which Paul uses in 1 Cor 15, reflects the apocalyptic hope. According to this hope, the life of the age to come will not be merely a prolongation of this present life but an entirely new, transformed mode of existence. It was into this mode of existence that Christ entered at his resurrection.

But his resurrection is not merely an incident in his own personal biography, as it were; he entered into that existence as the "first fruits" (1 Cor 15:20), that is, as the one who made it possible for believers also to enter into that new mode of existence after him.

That is the Christian hope.

### **Gospel: Luke 9:28b-36**

The use of the transfiguration story on the second Sunday of Lent in the revised Roman Lectionary follows the tradition of the *Missale Romanum*.

The Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist Lectionaries depart from the Roman Lectionary here and read the transfiguration story on the last Sunday after Epiphany. On that day it forms an admirable transition from the contemplation of the earthly ministry of Jesus as the manifestation of God in the Epiphany season to a contemplation of the passion as the ultimate epiphany.

In the Roman Lectionary the transfiguration story serves the theme: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem."

That Jesus and his disciples ascended a mountain for solitude after the abrupt conclusion of his Galilean ministry, and that Jesus communicated to his disciples his change of plan—which was to go up to Jerusalem and challenge the religious authorities in the nation's capital—is historically plausible.

This original nucleus of historical fact was then rewritten by the post-Easter community in the light of its Easter faith. There is some indication in the Gospels of an awareness that the events of Jesus' earthly life appeared in a different perspective after the first Easter (see John 2:22; 12:16).

Thus, what happened on the mountain was rewritten with the use of Old Testament materials.

The change in the appearance of Jesus' face is reminiscent of Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:29). Moses and

### **SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH**

**BY REGINALD  
H. FULLER**

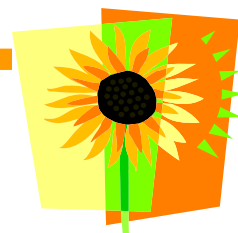
Elijah, both of whom figured in first-century Jewish apocalyptic as returning at the end, talk with Jesus about his "departure" (Greek: *exodos*), that is, his death and exaltation.

The disciples were ready enough to accept Jesus as one of the end-time figures, along with Moses and Elijah, but not yet as a unique figure of the end-time. So a voice from heaven proclaims the finality of Jesus: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him" (note the allusion to Deut 18:15).

Then we are told that after this "Jesus was found alone." The story as retold by the post-Easter Church is rich in symbolism, proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God, his final emissary, and the second Moses, who accomplishes the new Exodus.

The addition of the words "at Jerusalem" in verse 31 looks like a redactional addition, for it is one of Luke's major themes that the holy city is the focal point to which the ministry of Jesus moves. It is there that the saving event is accomplished, and it is from there that the proclamation of that saving event goes forth to the ends of the earth.

The point of all this is that the gospel proclaims, not a timeless myth (see 2 Pet 1:16, also about the transfiguration), but something that actually happened at a particular time and place in history.



# Transfigurations

## Questions for Bible Study

BY ANNE OSDIECK, SAINT LOUIS CENTER FOR LITURGY

“We have our citizenship in heaven”

Although we rarely pay attention to it, a great paradox haunts our practices of Lent. We go through these six weeks every year fairly easily; yet if we stopped to reflect seriously on what’s going on, it would be a shock. To our liberated American souls, it might even seem like an earthquake.

Just look at the imagery and themes of the period. Lent starts with ashes and a warning: “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” It prods to repentance: There is something wrong with us and the world. I am not O.K.; neither are you. We are insufficient. This life is not enough. Each of the six weeks brings a profound admission of our inadequacy.

This is not easy stuff for a world given to excuses and plea-bargaining. The most we admit to is making a mistake or perhaps behavioral problems. But to admit that we are in profound trouble?

### **THE WORD ENGAGED** BY JOHN KAVANAUGH

Why? We all know there is nothing so terribly wrong with us.

Even some of our hymnals have rewritten an old song here and there to mollify our tender egos. I’ve caught myself doing the same, balking before the admissions of “Amazing Grace.” I’ve thought of rephrasing it: something like “. . . how sweet the sound that saved a nice fellow like me.” Come to think of it, singing that I was once “lost” and “blind” seems to be overdoing it a bit.

Lent ends with an equally unpalatable celebration of cataclysmic failure: betrayal, brutality, cowardice, and degradation. True, it is reversed in a triumph of joy and glory, but in a way that defies all the laws of common sense. The dead, crucified one rises, his wounds glorious.

What is Lent trying to rub our faces in with all the talk of mercy, forgiveness, reform, and repentance?

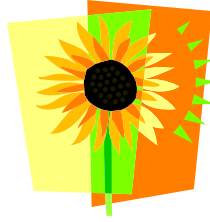
We here in the real world know that we are all really rather nice guys and gals. Sure, we make mistakes now and then. But who’s to blame us for our fumbling? And surely no one of us would ever deserve such a thing as hell. (I know the polls say that most Americans believe in hell, but the vast majority can’t imagine themselves being there.) Surely we are not in such desperate need as the drama of Lent seems to suggest. Surely we do not need someone to die for our sins. Some of us do not even know what such a strange concept might mean.

Why do we need salvation? Why do we even need God, especially if our stomachs are full, our insurance policies paid, and we live and die with the dignity appropriate to beings that can manage their lives tidily, think straight, and at least in some ways be smart and productive?

Lent reminds us that we settle for too little, expect too little of ourselves and of God. Even the earthly promises which God made to Abraham challenged his narrow and routine attitude. Abraham had to look far beyond himself, to the sky and the stars, to imagine a future beyond all his reckoning.

When it comes to accepting the cross and the resurrection, the confines of comfort are even more stretched. We almost have to make the cross something routine and uninteresting. It is an assault upon the delusion that things are going pretty well and that we can settle down to business as usual.

What does it mean to be an enemy of the cross? Paul says it has something to do with having our bellies as our gods. More directly



### **Genesis 15: 5-12, 17-18**

1. A covenant is a formal binding agreement, a promise between two parties. What did God promise Abraham? What did Abraham promise? Do you and we keep the bargain?

2. Abraham when he was faced with great uncertainties later. Do you think remembering these promises helped? What helps you face uncertainties and need to make decisions? Is God with you?

### **Philippians 3:17-21; 4:1**

1. Paul is urging the Philippians to keep their priorities straight. Do you find that an easy task? “Their minds are occupied with earthly things.” Would you fit right in with the Philippians in this? Discuss. Who or what helps you with the struggle of shoveling out the *earthly things* from your mind?

2. Paul talks about those “whom I love and long for, my joy and crown.” He really does love these people. Is it easier to take correction from someone who loves you than someone who doesn’t? Is there a lesson here?

### **Luke 9: 28-36**

1. Jesus told the disciples about the upcoming events and they didn’t accept the news well. How were the words, “This is my Son. Listen to him,” a stamp of approval from the Father on all that was about to take place? What does the transfiguration mean to you?

2. Peter prattled on without making much sense. How do you react to situations or to ideas you cannot comprehend? Automatic Rejection? Openness?

it means being locked into the things of this world. “As you well know, we have our citizenship in heaven; it is from there that we eagerly await the coming of our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body, by his power to subject everything to himself.”

There is another world, a higher realm, a kingdom not of this earth. There is someone other than ourselves whom we must listen to and obey, since he is the Word of God, the new lawgiver, and prophet, even more than Moses and Elijah. There is more than our frail bodies and the dust from which they came. Other bodies await us, more grand and glorious than the ones we have now. We are not the final word. Nor is our death.

Lent requires a tremendous psychological disengagement from our earthly prejudice. It is nothing but gibberish to a materialist mind. It is madness to anyone whose ultimate goal is to satisfy physical appetite.

But the meaning of Lent rests upon such a transfiguration of our minds and hearts. Its gestures and words require that we believe there is something, someone, for us beyond the stars and the everlasting hills. Otherwise Lent is poppycock.

Perhaps it was for these reasons that Paul wrote to Philippi and to all the denizens of earth, those he could so “love and long for, my joy and crown. Continue, my dear ones, to stand firm.” Not on the earth, but in the Lord.