

Homily on the Feast of the Transfiguration

Thanks to Supreme Knight Carl Anderson for the invitation to offer these reflections on the word of God proclaimed here today. It is early in the day, too early perhaps for me to ask questions of you, but not too early for us to recognize that the prophet Daniel knew how to catch the attention of those he wished to reach.

(Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14) In the first reading, Daniel relates his extraordinary vision of God the Father. In vivid language, he talks about the power and glory of our heavenly Father. His account is refreshing, as he describes God's throne as one of fire and tells of the "thousands upon thousands" who minister unto God.

Ours is a festal gathering, and I take it as an opportunity to recall a festive moment in Rome at the end of June, when the Holy Father led in the celebration of the First Vespers for the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul and promulgated his Apostolic Exhortation following on the Special Synod of Bishops for Europe. The next day came the Eucharist for the feast and the conferral of the pallium, the sign of office of Archbishop and Metropolitan, on some 40 new archbishops from around the world, including our own Archbishop Timothy Dolan of Milwaukee.

Although his limbs are frail, the Holy Father's voice was strong and clear on both occasions. What a wonderful gift the Lord has given to the Church in the person of our Holy Father, successor of the Apostle Peter.

Tradition places the site of the Transfiguration at Mount Tabor, a tradition Pope John Paul recalled earlier this year when he added to the Rosary the new Mysteries of Light. If you have seen Mt. Tabor, you know it is a special place. It juts up from

the Plains of Esdralon, like a loaf of bread upended.

When Jesus led the Apostles up that mountain, he challenged them to an exertion that required them to climb a very steep slope and brought them to a place where they could look to the West and see the Mediterranean on the horizon, stretching away toward Greece and other points, and to the East. There they saw the depression caused by the Sea of Galilee and knew that Copernaum and Tiberias were on its banks. Also, very clear before them was the village of Nazareth, where Jesus, conceived of the Virgin Mary, began his sojourn on earth.

(2 Peter 1:16-19) In the second reading the Apostle Peter himself addresses us. He compares the message, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” to “a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

(Mark 9:2-10) The Gospel passage brings us again in touch with the event of the Transfiguration. There is an explosion of light, of brightness, so that the Godhead is visible in the humanity of Jesus. Before this moment of new and intense light, the three Apostles had been drowsy. Now the weariness was gone. They were totally awake. They were pointed in a new direction, with an inner firmness of purpose and conviction.

They heard from Jesus a new charge: they were not to reveal what had happened until he rose from the dead. But this mystery of resurrection they did not, they could not understand, nor could they grasp what he meant by his prediction of betrayal and of physical suffering. We do know what happened, and we see it repeated, dramatically and painfully, in our own day.

But we know that all is for the purification of our family of faith, the Church. Now we prepare to enter into the great mystery of faith, when Jesus, under signs of bread

and wine, renews his great prayer to the Father and the sacrifice that makes our peace with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are attentive to the Father's words, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

We may thank God that the Church has listened to the Son in the tradition that is living and vital.

- We know we are called to works of justice and peace, and especially must we pray for the peace of Jerusalem and that who