

- Today in our first reading from the Book of Genesis, we hear the story of God the Father forming a covenant with Abram.
- Genesis tells us of how Abram - who soon thereafter will be called Abraham - sacrificed the various animals, split them in two, and how the smoking fire pot and flaming torch appeared and passed between the pieces.
- In ancient times when men would enter into covenants with one another, they would slaughter an animal - perhaps a cow, which was very valuable - and then walk between the pieces as the means of forming or "cutting" a covenant.
- Understand that a covenant isn't simply a contractual agreement between people. It's much deeper than that. It's a binding together of two people for a highly important purpose like marriage, and it connotes an exchange of self, not just an exchange of goods or services.
- Over the course of salvation history, this covenant between God and man first formed with Abram has been renewed several times, culminating with the eternal covenant between God and man effected by Jesus on the Cross.
- In that momentous covenantal act, Jesus Himself was both priest and victim: the One who offered the covenant and the Lamb who was offered. And every time we come to Mass, we experience this covenantal action of our God once again in an unbloody fashion.
- While Christ made this covenant on Calvary with all men, we enter into it personally through the Sacrament of Baptism. At that most sublime moment of our life, we make a promise to be God's holy people, and He promises to be our God and Father, saving us from our sins.
- At baptism we promise to live for God in this life as His children, so that we might be coheirs with Christ and inherit His heavenly kingdom in the next life.
- And in this process a miraculous exchange takes place: we exchange the poverty and weakness of our human condition for the riches and strength of God's grace. We exchange the filth of our sins for the purity of God's righteousness. In short, we exchange death for life.
- Whereas in the covenant God made with Abraham, God promised to give to His descendants the land from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river Euphrates, when we are baptized, we surrender our earthly attachments so that we might have a share of the Heavenly Kingdom.
- The problem, however, is that the world and its allurements can be ever so enticing! And the demands of daily living can lead us to focusing too much on this world, just as St. Paul speaks about in our 2nd reading today.
- In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul is encouraging us to remember that our true citizenship is in Heaven. He admonishes us not to be like those worldly people whose "God is their stomach," and whose "minds are occupied with earthly things."
- St. Paul states that you can tell who the "enemies of the cross of Christ" are, because their glory is in their shame, which means that they revel in their sinfulness; they brashly and smugly indulge in their sinful behavior without any pretense or remorse.
- Sadly, our world is full of these people, many of whom are so bold as to force their sinful behavior on the rest of us by getting it legalized and by bullying those who dare to oppose them. And it's sad because St. Paul tells us that their end is destruction.
- So we mustn't be like them. Rather than being occupied with the things of the world, rather than reveling in sin, we must remember that our citizenship is in heaven.

- Because of this truth, we must not allow ourselves to become too comfortable in our life here on earth, for this world is passing and our life here on earth is temporary.
- Yet we must remember that if we are true to Jesus our Savior: “He will change our lowly body to conform with His glorified body by the power that enables Him also to bring all things into subjection to Himself.”
- It’s a marvelous thing to think that, we, too, will be glorified. Yet that is part of our inheritance as children of God. We will share in His glory!
- Today’s Gospel is the familiar story of our Lord's transfiguration. Whereas Genesis tells us of the beginning of salvation history, the Gospel foreshadows the final end of salvation history, for the Transfiguration gives a glimpse of that glory we are called to in heaven.
- To be transfigured ourselves is what God desires for us, but for this to happen we must be faithful to our personal covenant with God formed at our baptism. Rather than being enemies of the cross of Christ who glory in their shame, we must stand firm in the Lord.
- So it is that we must use this life to prepare for heaven. We must prepare to be transfigured, for the call to be a Christian is the call to be transfigured. Whereas Christ was transfigured in Mt. Tabor in a moment, our transfiguration occurs over the course of our lifetime.
- While the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier is the One who transfigures us through our growth in holiness, we must cooperate with this process by the daily choices we make to either follow God’s will and His commandments, or to oppose Him.
- Simply put, the more we conform ourselves to God's will, the more transfigured we become. We also cooperate with the process of our personal transfiguration by being faithful to the covenantal promises we made at baptism, which we renew each year at Easter.
- Right now we are celebrating the penitential yet beautiful season of Lent. While Lent was created as a means of preparing for the glories of Easter, ultimately Lent is a means of preparing for heaven.
- This we do through our fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. Faithfully engaging in these Lenten practices help to transfigure us here on earth so that we may be more fully transfigured in heaven. Our Lenten practices help configure us into the likeness of Christ.
- Yet there’s more to being transfigured than following our Lenten practices. As I mentioned last Sunday at the Latin Mass, our hearts and our minds have to be united with God. We have to desire union with Him. We have to love Him above all else.
- For ultimately it is only our love for God that helps us move beyond our attachments to worldly attachments and vices. Very few people convert purely out of a fear of hell. No, what converts most hearts is an experience with our merciful Savior.
- As we see His goodness and come to know Him intimately in prayer, we begin to love Him.
- As we begin to love Him, we begin to see things as He sees them – and it is then that we lose our love for our sins and vices and find the strength to leave them behind so that we might be transfigured by God’s grace and mercy.
- As we meditate on our Lord's transfiguration today, let us joyfully renew our commitment to our Lenten and baptismal promises so that one day we, too, may enjoy the joys of heaven where all of us will share in our Lord's glory.
- May we all learn to love the Lord enough so that we may leave behind our worldly attachments, and thus be gradually transfigured into citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom!