

- It's well known that Pope St. John Paul II had a deep devotion to Our Lady and the Holy Rosary. In fact, in 2002 the Holy Father created a whole other set of mysteries of the Rosary that we call the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary.
- The point of these mysteries is to help us meditate on the public life of Jesus, when we see Him as the Light of the World, calling us to conversion. One of the beautiful moments of Christ's public ministry that is celebrated in the Luminous Mysteries is His Transfiguration.
- Of course, we hear about our Lord's Transfiguration in today's Gospel, where before His apostles Peter, James, and John, Jesus reveals His glory atop Mt. Tabor.
- If you've been to Mt. Tabor, you know it's the perfect place for a theophany such as this, rising majestically as it does amidst the plains that stretch from the Jezreel Valley to the Sea of Galilee.
- In this incredible moment in His public ministry, standing on this majestic mount, Jesus pulls back the veils that have hidden His glory, revealing Who he truly is.
- He's not just a good preacher who's able to do some miracles. He's the Son of God, a fact confirmed by the Father, Who is heard saying: "This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him."
- How blessed were those three apostles who, like Moses, were able to get a glimpse of the glory of God. It's this glory of God that we are called to increase by our holiness of life.
- It's this glory of God that we will share in once we get to Heaven. In Heaven we will have glorified bodies, and all of our darkness, all of sinfulness will be washed away. We will be purified of our sinfulness such that we will shine like the stars in the heavens!
- The more that we purify ourselves of sin during our earthly life, the greater will we glorify God, and the greater our glory will be in Heaven. And that's what Lent and our Lenten sacrifices are all about: purifying us of our sins – transfiguring us.
- Our Lenten sacrifices, when made earnestly, can help detach us from worldly things so that we can cling all the more closely to God. In fact, the word *sacrifice* is derived from two Latin words: "sacra" ("holy") and "facere" ("to make"). Thus, it means "to make holy."
- Specifically, we make sacrifices in order to be more like God Himself. We make sacrifices in order to unite ourselves more closely to the One who sacrificed Himself for us.
- For the past two Sundays I've been talking about fasting and sacrifice, encouraging you to choose appropriate forms of fasting, and most specially to fast from sin. And we are called to do this not primarily for our own good, but as a means of glorifying God.
- In Lent we should be focusing on God, working to give Him greater glory. In today's world we tend to filter everything through the selfish question of: "What's in this for me?"
- With a proud selfishness, we tend to think of our own needs and wants and how things affect us before any other consideration, when instead we should be reiterating the words of St. John the Baptist: "He must increase, I must decrease" (cf. John 3:30).
- So, all that we do in Lent must be focused on increasing God's glory, not our own. I'm making this point for a third Sunday in a row because turning one's focus away from oneself so that you can focus more intently on God is a fundamental step for growing in holiness.
- Becoming God-centered rather than self-centered is a corner we must all turn to make progress in the spiritual life.
- One of the very best examples of complete detachment from one's own needs and wants to glorify God is found in the story of Abraham and Isaac in our first reading today.

- Abraham held Isaac with a particular love because Isaac was the child of his old age, the child of God's promise. Isaac was the one thing Abraham held most dear!
- Yet Abraham loved God even more because he was willing to give up that which was most dear to him for the sake of being obedient to God.
- Now we can only imagine how God was glorified in that utterly unselfish act, for God is always glorified when man imitates Him. And in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham was like God the Father, Who sacrificed His only begotten Son for our redemption.
- Of course, keep in mind that while God does ask us to sacrifice, God doesn't ask for sacrifices because He wants to see us suffer. Like Abraham, He wants to test our virtue. He wants to know how much we trust Him, how much we love Him.
- And remember what God said to Abraham after he passed the test. The Lord said: "Because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly."
- The same is true for us: if we are willing to sacrifice something we love, something of value, something that gives us comfort, out of love for God, He will bless us abundantly too.
- Think about the second reading today. As St. Paul wrote, if God was willing to spare His own Son, "how will He not also give us everything else along with Him?" And in particular He will give us the blessing of holiness.
- For as St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, our holiness is God's will (cf. 1 Thes 4:3).
- Our sacrifices make us holy because they unite us to Christ, Who sacrificed everything for us on the cross. Our sacrifices make us holy because they help to free us from our attachments to earthly things.
- Our sacrifices make us holy because they increase our capacity to love God and neighbor.
- And as we grow in holiness, we give glory to God – that glory He so richly deserves from His creatures.
- Ask yourself: What am I most attached to? Am I willing to give up everything for God? Am I willing to be like Abraham and give up even that which is most dear to me? And if you haven't yet given up anything for Lent, it's not too late!
- While so many of us often try to do extra things for Lent, like going to daily Mass, praying more, or doing some type of service, let's not neglect the practice of fasting.
- It's not enough just to do extra things in Lent; we must fast! If we neglect to make sacrifices, we short-change ourselves.
- So let us fast well, my friends, most especially from sin, and in giving up those things that we desire or hold dear, let us be confident that we are giving God that glory He desires from us.