



I Came to Bring Fire

Fr. Armando's Gospel Meditations

2nd Sunday of Lent The Transfiguration

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 (Lk. 9:28-36).

I. WENT UP TO THE MOUNTAIN TO PRAY

PETITION: *God our Father, you bid us to listen to your beloved Son in whom you are pleased. Nourish our hearts with your word, purify the eyes of our mind, and fill us with the joy that is caused by the vision of your glory.*

This time of Lent is a time for renewing our prayer life. Jesus wants to take us deeper into prayer, to a communion of love with Him which is a taste of eternal life. Remember that it is not only important to

pray, but more importantly it is how we pray. If somebody were to ask you what prayer is, how would you answer? How would you define prayer?

The majority of responses would probably be that prayer is talking to God. For a great number of Catholics, prayer is just about reciting the words in a prayer, not ‘praying’ them. Does God need our “prayer”? Is there anything that we can say to God that He doesn’t already know eternally? Are the words for Him, or for us?

Prayer is more about entering into the mystery of God than just stating or reciting that which He already knows. It is true however, especially when we talk from our hearts, that as a loving Father, he, wants us to tell him all of our concerns and worries: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you” (1 Pt. 5:6–7).

The first principle of prayer for Christian life is that God loves you. He loves you with a love that surpasses every love that you can imagine or desire; the clearest physical expression (partially because his love is greater) is the Passion and Cross of his Beloved Son, Jesus. Faith in the love of God, and more precisely, his Mercy for us, his love for us as a sinner, is the foundation of all prayer. This is the reason prayer is founded in faith, as in Christian life, because without faith we continue to have the wrong conceptions of God; usually projections from the past of our parent’s behavior or just our own bad thoughts. The only way for me to open to God, who is love, is through faith. Thus, prayer is entering into the mystery of God, into the presence of God, being in communion with God.

God infinitely surpasses our understanding of Him, therefore, whatever we may think about God is erroneous. God infinitely surpasses your understanding and it is only through faith that we open to Him who is the Light of Light; and entering, and reentering again and again via prayer, is how we learn to remain in his love. How can we remain in Him if we cannot enter into Him through our hearts?

The love of God is powerful, Almighty, so in prayer we must open our hearts, our souls, our being and our existence to the infinite love and power of God. This only happens with faith and hope.

“Prayer has far more to do with what God wants to do in us than with our trying to ‘reach’ or ‘realize,’ still less ‘entertain,’ God in prayer.... What we think of as our search for God is, in reality, a response to the divine Lover drawing us to himself. There is never a moment when divine Love is not at work... This work is nothing other than a giving of the divine Self in love. The logical consequence for us must surely be that our part is to let ourselves be loved, let ourselves be given to, let ourselves be worked upon by this great God and made capable of total union with Him” (*Essence of Prayer*, Ruth Burrows).

II. “MASTER, IT IS GOOD THAT WE ARE HERE”

PETITION: My God you created us for happiness, and when we recognize this, we try to put our desire of happiness in the only place it can exist, which is in union with you. You are the Fountain of all happiness (cf. Roman Missal, 3rd Edition). We beg you oh Lord, that you may always be our only happiness and the final orientation of all our desires, longings and wishes, so that our soul may rejoice always in you, Jesus our God and Savior.

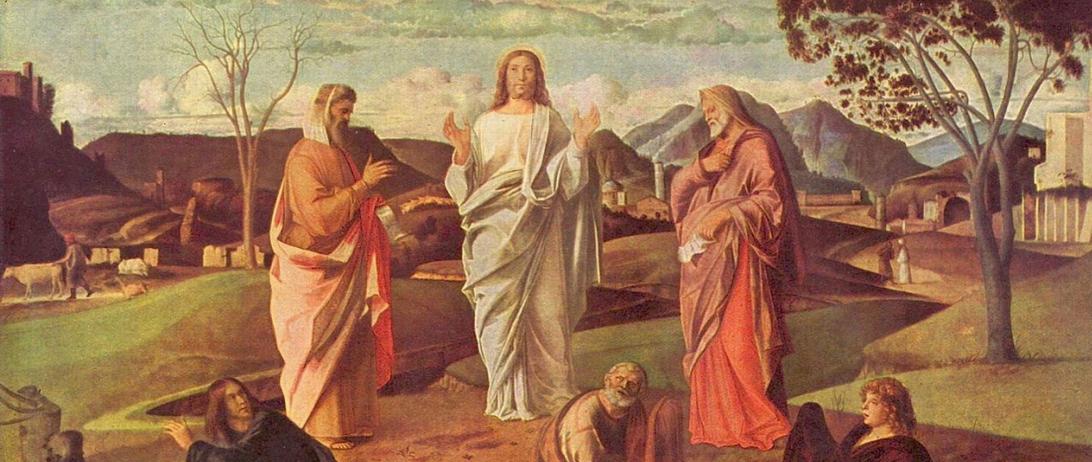


When prayer is true prayer, it is always transformative; it transfigures us. If we pray then our life should change, because love changes us; it is only love that has the power to renew us. Prayer is learning to open to the love of God and to remain in that love.

In the gospel of the Transfiguration, Jesus takes away every distraction from Peter, James, and John as he takes them to the top of a mountain to be and to pray with him. This walk to a high place approaches, in a physical allusion, becoming nearer to God in Heaven, away from this world and its allurements, from the many noises and distractions that do not let us attain the depth of the love of God. Prayer is for our comprehension “with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:18–19). For Jesus and the three Apostles, it was only in that place, seemingly apart from

the world in the silence of the heights, with an atmosphere that let God breathe, a place set apart for this encounter, where they experienced God’s glory and His Majesty. Jesus guided them to this place where they could enter into the presence of God, where they could almost touch the Mystery. The exclamation of St. Peter, “Lord, it is good that we are here,” gives us an understanding of the grace that they were experiencing (Mt. 17:4). In prayer we are called to “taste and see the goodness of the Lord; happy are those who take refuge in him. O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing” (Ps 34:9-11).

“If you believe you will see the glory of God” (Jn. 11:40). Prayer is a matter of faith, of letting God be God in our hearts, letting Him become the Source, the Guidance and Goal of our internal and external actions.



This is the prayer of the Church on the Thursday after Ash Wednesday: “Prompt our actions with your inspiration, we pray, O Lord, and further them with your constant help, that all we do may always begin from you and by you be brought to completion” (cf. Roman Missal, 3rd Edition).

Prayer is the union of man with God, the foretaste of the coming joy, our virtues, access to great graces, encouragement of the soul, strength for the weak, light of intelligence, tasting the fruits of the Spirit, the only way of holiness, the school of the Gifts of the Spirit, etc. Prayer helps man in all things, because it teaches us to open and remain united to the Source of all good, and grace. What thing can be greater than that which approaches to God and perseveres with Him in this closeness?

No one can ever really be taught about the true beauty and loveliness of prayer, because the only real instructor of prayer is God. It is only Him who can teach us Wisdom and Love in the intimacy of our hearts.

To be good is to adhere to God, and he who unites himself to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17), in this is our life. “Choose life so that you may live,

loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you” (Dt. 30:19–20).

Prayer is seeking the union with God, for being internally transfigured by the Spirit of love and truth: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Cor. 3:17–18)

III. BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL (PS. 103)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all my being, bless his holy name.

Give thanks to the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all his blessings.

It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion. It is He who fills your life with good things, renewing your youth like an eagle’s.

The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.