

## Prayer helps to open our eyes

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Luke 9:28-36. (R1) Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18. (R2) Philippians 3:17-4:1.

The three great works of Lent are fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Last Sunday's Gospel spoke of Jesus fasting in the desert for 40 days. This Sunday's Gospel speaks of prayer. "Jesus took Peter, John and James, and went up onto a mountain to pray."

Just before this incident, Jesus had taken the Apostles to Caesarea-Philippi. There, Peter confessed Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus was elated. Peter's confession completed the first half of Jesus' mission, which was to establish a church founded on the rock-truth that he was the Messiah, the Son of God. Having done this, Jesus then began the second half of his ministry, namely, the work of redemption. So after Peter's confession, Jesus told him he was going to be a suffering messiah. Peter protested. Jesus turned on him and called him a devil.

Jesus realized that the doctrine of the cross was going to be a problem for his Apostles. So he took the core leaders of the 12 to a mountain to pray — to pray for their enlightenment, that they might see the place of the cross in his life. As Jesus prayed, he was transfigured — "His face changed in appearance and his clothes became dazzling white." Prayer ought always to change us too. Prayer ought always to bring us into contact with God and godly



a word  
for  
sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

persons.

Moses and Elijah appeared — representing the Law and the Prophets. "And they spoke of his passage which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem." The Greek word Luke used for "passage" is "exodon," as if to point out that the first exodus of Moses leading Israel out of Egyptian slavery was but a figure of the exodus of Jesus. Moses led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt. Jesus was going to lead not only the Hebrews, but all the human race, out of the slavery of sin to the freedom of the children of God. Moses obtained liberation through the slaying of the firstborn of the Egyptians. Jesus would obtain salvation through his own death. The blood of a lamb sprinkled on doorposts saved the Hebrews. The blood of Jesus on the doorposts of the cross would save all humans. Moses led the Hebrews to the Promised Land; Jesus would lead the human race to the promised land of heaven.

Thus after the transfiguration, Jesus headed for Jerusalem to shed his blood there on the doorposts of the cross. Then he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. His death, resurrection and ascension is the Paschal Mystery, foreshadowing our own death, resurrection and ascension. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus very probably were witnessed by the two at the transfiguration: Moses and Elijah.

On the mount of transfiguration, Peter, John and James heard a voice say, "This is my Son." The voice of God spoke to let Peter know that his confession of the divinity of Jesus at Caesarea-Philippi was correct.

But then the voice went on to say, "Listen to him." The heavenly voice was telling Peter that he was wrong in not accepting Jesus' teaching about a suffering messiah. The Apostles were dumbstruck. But this was a breakthrough for them. The memory of this event would carry them through the scandal of the cross.

In this transfiguration scene we might say that God's word to us is, "This is my Son. Listen to him! Listen to him!" That is the great need at the heart of humanity: to listen to the words of Christ. We will if we pray fervently and perseveringly; and if we do, we too shall be transfigured.

The invisible God becomes visible to the soul that prays, transfiguring it.

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;

We rise, and all, the distant and the near,  
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;

We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power.

Bit by bit in the hush, our eyes will be opened and we'll start seeing him and what he expects of us. His face will become radiant and we'll cry, "How good it is for us to be here."

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Father Shamon is the administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

### Daily Readings

**Monday, March 9**

Daniel 9:4-10; Luke 6:36-38

**Tuesday, March 10**

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20;

Matthew 23:1-12

**Wednesday, March 11**

Jeremiah 18:18-20;

Matthew 20:17-28

**Thursday, March 12**

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31

**Friday, March 13**

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28;

Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

**Saturday, March 14**

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20;

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

## Church needs to communicate message clearly

If the church wants to make an impact on the third millennium, I suggest that it evaluate its ways of communicating what it holds most important.

How often is a document produced, then put before the public with the expectation that it will be acted upon simply because of its merits? Although this process sometimes is reasonably successful, something more really is needed.

The church needs to make better use of the various schools of thought that study how to create change. In addition to writing a document, the church needs to teach those responsible for implementing it how to use strategies for change — strategies that will help them achieve their goals.

All around us we see the sophisticated art of change moving people in directions they ordinarily wouldn't go. We only have to reflect on the advertising world to realize how "change masters" have gotten us to use all sorts of new products we wouldn't have thought we



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BY FATHER EUGENE HEMRICK

needed.

One school of thought on change is represented by S.I. Hayakawa and Alfred Korzybski. They learned that if we are disciplined in semantics, we will communicate more adequately and reason more effectively. When we pick and use the right words, we connect with people. Making this connection increases the likelihood that they will change.

For example, we can say to people, "You need to face the fact that this parish will probably close." Or, we can say, "We need to think about the possibility of our

parish closing."

In the former statement people are being told something, and the speaker is set apart from his or her audience. In the latter statement people are invited, not told, and the speaker talks as if he or she is one of them.

On the use of good semantics, Pope Paul VI once told us that if we are to have a successful dialogue that will lead to change, we must be clear. "Dialogue supposes and demands comprehensibility. It is an outpouring of thought; it is an invitation to the exercise of the highest powers which a person possesses ....

"This fundamental requirement is enough to enlist our apostolic care to review every angle of our language to guarantee that it be understandable, acceptable and well-chosen."

How often do we see the very opposite of clarity of speech, with a speaker tossing out half-defined ideas filled with buzz words that are offensive or fail to take into consideration the situation of the audience?

The art of semantics teaches us that the written and spoken word both must be given weight. Our words must be chosen carefully, thought out and reverently placed before an audience.

Another method for creating change is the use of "utopian" thinking of the sort that presents an audience with reasonable ideas for the future. It encourages people to imagine the best scenario possible, to long to achieve the best. This strategy by which one "imagines" the future is especially effective when people face endless problems that make a situation appear hopeless.

The church has entered a new age in which not only the content of its documents is important (and they are important), but in which it must consciously decide how best to communicate that content — how to promote change that is positive.

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Father Hemrick is director of diocesan relations at the Catholic University of America.

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