



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 13 March 2022

[Multimedia]

The Gospel of the Liturgy of this second Sunday of Lent narrates the Transfiguration of Jesus (cf. Lk 9: 28-36). While praying on a high mountain, he changes in appearance, his robe becomes bright and radiant, and in the light of his glory, Moses and Elijah appear, who speak with him about the Passover that awaits him in Jerusalem, namely, his Passion, Death and Resurrection.

The witnesses to this extraordinary event are the apostles Peter, John and James, who went up the mountain with Jesus. We can imagine them with their eyes wide open before that unique sight. And, certainly, it must have been so. But the evangelist Luke notes that “Peter and those who were with him were *heavy with sleep*”, and that “when they wakened” they saw the glory of Jesus (cf. v. 32). The drowsiness of the three disciples appears to be a discordant note. The same apostles then fall asleep in Gethsemane too, during the anguished prayer of Jesus, who had asked them to keep watch (cf. Mk 14:37-41). This sleepiness in such important moments is surprising.

However, if we read carefully, we see that Peter, John and James fall asleep precisely before the Transfiguration begins, that is, while Jesus is in prayer. The same would happen in Gethsemane. This is evidently a prayer that continued for some time, in silence and reflection. We may think that, at the beginning, they too were praying, until tiredness prevailed, until sleep prevailed.

Brothers, sisters, does this ill-timed slumber perhaps resemble many of our own that come in moments we know to be important? Perhaps in the evening, when we would like to pray, to spend some time with Jesus after a day of rushing around and being busy. Or when it is time to exchange a few words with the family and we no longer have the strength. We would like to be more awake, attentive, participatory, not to miss precious opportunities, but we are unable to, or we manage it somehow, but poorly.

The powerful time of Lent is an opportunity in this regard. It is a period in which God wants to awaken us from our inner lethargy, from this sleepiness that does not let the Spirit express itself. Because — let us bear this in mind — keeping the heart awake does not depend on us alone: it is a grace and must be requested. The three disciples of the Gospel show us this: they were good, they had followed Jesus onto the mountain, but by their own strength they could not stay awake. This happens to us too. However, they awoke precisely during the Transfiguration. We might think that it was the light of Jesus that reawakened them. Like them, we too are in need of God's light, that makes us see things in a different way: it attracts us, it reawakens us, it reignites our desire and strength to pray, to look within ourselves, and to dedicate time to others. We can overcome the tiredness of the body with the strength of the Spirit of God. And when we are unable to overcome this, we must say to the Holy Spirit: "Help us, come, come, Holy Spirit. Help me: I want to encounter Jesus, I want to be attentive, awake". Asking the Holy Spirit to bring us out of this slumber that prevents us from praying.

In this Lenten time, after the labours of each day, it will do us good not to switch off the light in the room without placing ourselves in the light of God. To pray a little before sleeping. Let's give the Lord the chance to surprise us and to reawaken our hearts. We can do this, for instance, by opening the Gospel and letting ourselves be amazed by the Word of God, because the Scripture enlightens our steps and inflames the heart. Or we can look at the crucified Jesus and wonder at the boundless love of God, who never tires of us and has the power to transfigure our days, to give them a new meaning, a new, unexpected light.

May the Virgin Mary help us to keep our heart awake, to welcome this time of grace that God offers to us.

After the Angelus

Brothers and sisters, we have just prayed to the Virgin Mary. This week, the city that bears her name, Mariupol, has become a city martyred by the heartbreaking war that is devastating Ukraine. Faced with the barbarity of the killing of children, and of innocent and defenceless citizens, there are no strategic reasons that hold up: the only thing to be done is to cease the unacceptable armed aggression before the city is reduced to a cemetery. With an aching heart I add my voice to

that of the common people, who implore the end of the war. “In the name of God, let the cries of those who suffer be heard and let the bombings and attacks cease! Let there be a real and decisive focus on negotiation, and let the humanitarian corridors be effective and safe. In the name of God, I ask you: stop this massacre!”

I would like once again to urge the welcoming of the many refugees, in whom Christ is present, and to give thanks for the great network of solidarity that has formed. I ask all diocesan and religious communities to *increase their moments of prayer for peace*. God is only the God of peace, he is not the God of war, and those who support violence profane his name. Now let us pray in silence for those who suffer, and that God may convert hearts to a steadfast will for peace.

I greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims who have come from Italy and from various countries. In particular, I greet the faithful of the Dioceses of Naples, Fuorigrotta, Pianura, Florence and Carmignano, as well as the delegation of the Non-violent Movement.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday, and please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!