

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR C)

March 17, 2019

Genesis 15:5–12, 17–18 • Philippians 3:17–4:1 • Luke 9:28b–36

### I.

I read an interesting article about the hardware that undergirds the Internet.

It's something that's intrigued me for some time:

How are bits of data  
—essentially combinations of 0s and 1s—  
transmitted at nearly instantaneous speed around the world?

How does that information traverse the Atlantic Ocean?

Well, there are ships that carefully lay miles and miles of fiber optic cable on the ocean floor.

It's something that we never really think about;  
we just assume that our emails and other communications  
will make it to their destination.

Crews on these ships spend weeks at sea, laying the cable.

And if seas are rough, operations cease;  
the crew cuts the cable and tethers it to buoy.

The ship returns later and splices the cable,  
continuing the meticulous operation.

### II.

For me, this is an apt image for how the Church works:  
the average person does not see most of it,  
but it makes a differences in people's lives.

On Wednesdays, as you know,  
we have choir rehearsal and religious education.

On that night especially, much of the work of the parish is done.  
On Wednesdays,  
as I'm moving from one group of young people to another,  
I can hear the choir practicing in the church.

As I visit classrooms and participate in the catechesis myself,  
I am filled with gratitude for the volunteers who teach,  
and for the parents who bring their children.

For me, this is a view of the "sacred infrastructure" of the Church.

It's a moment of realization,  
along the lines of the Transfiguration in today's Gospel.

Why do we read this episode during Lent?

As you'll hear in today's Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer,  
the purpose of the Transfiguration is to prepare the Apostles—and us—  
for the approaching Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ:

"For after he had told the disciples of his coming Death,  
on the holy mountain he manifested to them his glory,  
to show... that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection."

The Transfiguration was a glimpse—a preview—  
of Jesus' resurrected glory,  
because Christ had announced that he would suffer and die.

Especially today, amid the clerical abuse scandal in the Church, we need a reassurance of God's presence and activity.

I can testify that despite the horrors of the abuse scandal, which I've spoken about at length, good things are happening in the Church.

This is true of the parish and throughout the diocese.

With that as the backdrop, I would like to comment on the Annual Diocesan Appeal, which takes place this weekend.

The Annual Appeal is like that underwater fiber optic cable that powers the Internet.

The money you give supports many important works.

I'm going to focus on one work, one that has personally benefitted me: seminary education.

From 2000 to 2006, I received a first-rate theological education at the Catholic University of America in Washington.

I have used that education every day of my priesthood.

A priest has many responsibilities, and a good education is essential.

It costs over \$40,000 a year to educate one seminarian.

And happily, the ranks of diocesan seminarians continue to grow.

I am grateful that I did not have to pay for my seminary education;  
I was able to focus on discerning and training for the priesthood.

In a meaningful way,  
I believe that I repay that debt each day as a priest.

I know that many people are angry because of the abuse scandal;  
I am too.

I know that many people are upset with the bishops of the Church;  
I am too.

And I know that many people are reluctant to give money to the diocese  
for this reason.

I would only say that your support of the Annual Appeal is support for  
future priests: the men who will baptize your children,  
hear your confessions, anoint you when you are sick,  
and celebrate Mass in the coming decades.

**III.**

“While [Jesus] was praying his face changed in appearance  
and his clothes became dazzling white. ...  
[Peter and his companions] saw his glory.”

Our faith is based on the Paschal Mystery:  
the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Suffering is real; difficulty is unavoidable.

Christ experienced these things and then returned from the dead,  
to lead us to God.

In the words of St. Paul in the Second Reading,

“Our citizenship is in heaven,  
and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

We not only have a preview of Jesus’ Resurrection, like the Apostles;  
we also have their testimony that he did rise.

That witness strengthens us to do Christ’s work.

That is the Church’s mission.

“This is my chosen Son; listen to him.”

Those words change lives, beginning with our own.