

March 1, 2026—Second Sunday of Lent

The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles was one of the three pilgrimage feasts that the Jews celebrated each year. All the Jews would build booths or huts out of palm branches, and camp out in the plain surrounding the city of Jerusalem. It was like a national campout for seven days. It took place after the fall harvests. They offered sacrifices in the Temple to worship God who had once again blessed them with a fruitful harvest. But it meant more than that. At the same time, it recalled the Exodus of their ancient ancestors from Egypt and the 40 years they camped out in the desert until they reached the Promised Land. Finally, it pointed to the future when the Messiah would come and lead his people in joy and triumph.

In the Gospel, Jesus was transfigured before the eyes of His three apostles. The very light of His divinity shone through his human flesh and clothing. The apostles saw the glory of God revealed before them. Then the two great figures of the Old Testament, Moses, representing the holy Law of God and Elijah, representing the prophets, appeared and conversed with Jesus. With Israel camping out, below, for the Feast of Booths, it is no wonder that Peter said, **“Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”** It looked like the time of the Messiah and His triumph had come.

St. Luke adds a little detail to the conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah; **“they spoke of His exodus, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem”** (Luke 9:31). Jesus was going to leave the world through His sacrificial death on the cross. The triumph of the Messiah was not to be through earthly victories but through His atoning suffering and death, which would lead to the triumph of the resurrection. The Exodus of Israel from slavery in Egypt was a type or foreshadowing of His sacrifice which would free the world from the slavery of sin. He was revealing God’s great plan to Moses and Elijah who both had a part in preparing for it, in their own time.

In the scene of the Transfiguration, we see the Presence of all three Person of the Blessed Trinity. In His transfigured glory we see God the Son, true God and true man. We see the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the cloud that overshadows them like the pillar of smoke and fire that led the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land.

We hear the voice of God the Father, saying, **“This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”** These are the same words that our

Father God spoke at the time of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Here, He adds, “**Listen to Him.**” Those words say so much about how God respects our freedom to choose to follow Jesus and His teachings or not. He doesn’t force us to follow Him; He asks us to freely listen and follow Him.

It is so sad that many people who were baptized Catholic have left the Church. Many have decided to make up their own religion. Of course, their religion doesn’t mean getting up to go to Church and worship God on Sunday. If they express it in any way, it is a vague kind of religion that doesn’t make any demands or have any set teachings, except that everyone is going to heaven automatically when they die. The danger is that a person can make God into their own image, according to their preferences, rather than being transformed into His likeness.

Jesus did found a Church; it is the Catholic Church. He did command us to worship Him on Sunday through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He gave us the 7 sacraments and the Sacred Scripture, as the primary sources of His grace. Jesus gave us the moral teachings that are so wise; they protect the dignity of the human person in a world that tries to reduce us to animals who seek nothing more than their own pleasure and comfort. He didn’t institute the Church to burden us but gave her to us so that we have a sure road to heaven, but also, the strength to stay on that narrow road. He has given His Church a great treasure in the example of the saints and all the devotions and prayers, and, such as the Stations of the Cross. I encourage you to pray at our outdoor Stations during this Lent.

The First Reading told us of the legendary call of Abraham. He had the choice to follow God or remain where he was. He was the first to make a definitive decision for God in a world that worshipped pagan gods. Abraham was promised that would receive a land—the Promised Land; he would be the father of many nations—we still call him “**our Father in faith**”. And finally, that he would be a blessing to those who blessed him.

For us the Promised Land on earth is the Church, wherever she gathers together in prayer, particularly the Holy Eucharist, and in charity, serving the needs of others. The ultimate Promised Land though, is not here on earth, but in heaven.

This Lenten time is meant for us to learn to obey our heavenly Father and listen to His beloved Son. We are called to freely follow Jesus as our Savior, not the devil and fall into his traps. Jesus alone is our Savior, let’s renew that commitment we made at our baptism, or our parents did for us, and be ready to renew those baptismal promises once again at Easter.

