

## HOMILY 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY LENT

### March 1, 2026

A year before I was ordained I was doing my internship at St. Gemma and St. Christine Parishes. During that time, the first priest in The Archdiocese of Detroit was removed because of abuse. I went to the parish he was removed from and sat with a small group of the staff and parishioners for a day. I experienced the pain they were experiencing. After that I day I thought, “I just cannot go on to ordination. I can’t be part of this priesthood where this happens.” I was really shaken by this experience. On my day off, I decided to go to Eucharistic adoration. During that time, I totally lost a sense of time and place and I felt totally enveloped in God’s love. Hours later I became aware of closing benediction. God spoke to me “You will not be part of that priesthood where this happens, that is why you need to be ordained.” I never doubted my vocation after that day. I had this God experience when I needed it. It transformed me.

In the Gospel reading we heard an account of the Transfiguration. Just prior to this, Jesus told the apostles that he was going to suffer and die and on the third day he would be raised. They did not know what to do with this information. I think they needed to have a God experience to strengthen their faith for what was to come. Jesus picked Peter, James and John to go up the mountain and experience the divinity of Jesus. That helped all of the disciples to deal with what was to come. It transformed them.

I had my powerful God experience 25 years ago and have not had one like it since. When I start doubting God’s existence or his presence with me I recall this experience and it helps me deal with what I am struggling with. I know some of you have had God experiences because you have told me about them. We need to recall those God experiences when we are struggling, and hearing about the God experiences of others can help us as well. We cannot create God experiences because they are a gift from God, but we do need to be open to them. I was open to my experience by going to adoration and it transformed me.

God sometimes transforms our lives in big ways, but God can transform our lives in smaller ways every day. We do our part in being open to God and then he can do his part. One of the ways that we can be open to God during Lent as a Church is through the three pillars of Lent, prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

I want to give you a few suggestions in these three areas that may help you. In the area of prayer, all types of prayer are good, but we need to have some quiet time where we allow God to speak to us. When we are struggling with something in prayer, we frequently tell God what to do. We can be very persistent in telling him what to do and hopefully wear him down so he gives us what we want. If he does not do what we tell him to do, we think he does not hear our prayer or that he does not love us. I have found that a better approach is to bring the issue to God and ask him what he thinks we should do. The answer may come during prayer time or at another time during the day, but if you are open it will come. We do not change God through our prayer. Our prayer changes us. He transforms us.

In the area of fasting, someone told me the other day that fasting must be pure penance, pure suffering. If you benefit in some way from the fasting, it does not count. For example, if you give up junk food during Lent and lose weight that you need to lose, it does not count. Well, if that helps you ok. But I think both elements can be present. I am going to suggest that you give up social media for Lent. If it is an addiction, if you spend a lot of time on social media, that will involve suffering. It will be hard to give up. Ask God to help you do that. But studies show that if you spend a lot of time on social media and you give it up, by the end of Lent you will be less anxious, less depressed and less lonely. You may even be able to continue this come Easter. What do you need to give up? You may be able to break a bad habit during Lent.

In the area of almsgiving, I am going to suggest that you do one act of kindness every day, something to help others. It does not have to be big. Small things can make a difference. Ask God what he wants you to do. Write it in your gratitude journal. Every day, three specific things you have to be grateful for and your act of kindness. By the end of Lent, you will be more kind. You will be looking for ways to be kind each day.

Be open to God. Use the three pillars of Lent to do your part and God will do his. Let Jesus transform you.