Father O'Connor's Homily for 1 March 2026
Second Sunday of Lent– A

Genesis 12: 1-4a
2 Timothy 1: 8b-10
Matthew 17: 1-9

In the course of life, we listen to many people. Some are wise, and some are foolish, or at least misled. Some try to help us to salvation, while others have no idea that life is a journey to heaven.

It might be helpful to list in your mind all the people you listen to every day. This will include the voices on social media, the actor on television who tells us that we really need Plexiderm to erase those bags under our eyes, the news commentator who perhaps unknowingly distorts the truth, or the preacher who minimizes the divine message and offers a Christianity without a cross, or a discipleship without a commitment.

Today's passage from Matthew's Gospel is an ultimate mountaintop experience. Jesus took His closest apostles, Peter, James and John, up Mount Tabor and was transfigured in a moment of glory before them.

They saw a sudden change come over Jesus. As Matthew tells us: "His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light." The apostles had never seen Him like this before.

And then Jesus is talking with Moses and Elijah. Moses gave the Chosen People the Ten Commandments and led them to the Promised Land. Elijah the Prophet was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire. These two men, Moses and Elijah, represented the Law and the Prophets, the sources of authority in Jewish life.

Then Matthew tells us: "A bright cloud cast a shadow over them. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.'"

In this Gospel we are told by God the Father Himself to listen to Jesus, His Son. In the Gospels Jesus Himself speaks to us. Notice how the Mass calls this to mind.

In the first two readings from Scripture today, which are the Word of God, the lector began by citing where each passage was from. "A reading from the Book of Genesis," and "A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy." Then at the end of each passage, the Lector announced,

"The Word of the Lord." And we responded, "Thanks be to God." Notice that this dialogue between the Lector and all of us was as all in third person.

Then it came time for the Gospel to be proclaimed, and what did we do? We all stood up, ready to hear Jesus speak to us, and we sang the Gospel acclamation for the Lenten season, "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory," as the Book of the Gospels was carried in procession from the altar to the ambo [the pulpit]. Then the priest continued the dialogue and said, "The Lord be with you." And everyone answered, "And with your spirit." He announced, "A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew," as he traced the cross with his thumb on the page of the Gospel that was going to be read. And we responded, "Glory to you, O Lord," as we traced the cross with our thumbs on our foreheads, our lips and our hearts, asking that the words of the Gospel today be in our minds, in our hearts and on our lips. Then we listened to the proclamation of the Gospel, as Jesus Himself spoke to us.

At the end of the Gospel, the priest announced, "The Gospel of the Lord." And we responded, "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ." Notice that this Gospel dialogue was all in second person. It was in direct address to Jesus Himself. Why? Because **the Gospel is Jesus speaking to us.**

Why then do we not listen to Jesus when He speaks to us and put <u>His</u> words before all other words and ideas? Why don't we make every effort to follow them, even when it is difficult, as it often is?

Recall that we are told to seek first the kingdom of heaven, to enter by the narrow gate, to forgive and love our enemies, to see and serve Him in the poor.

Quite likely we do not deny these commands, but perhaps we do not place them first among all the bits of advice and information that we receive. The media – in its many forms and avenues – may in fact occupy more of our attention than the words of the Son of God Himself.

As this Second Week of Lent is at hand, I encourage you to concentrate on some of Our Lord's own words to us. When we read the Bible, there is something unique about the Gospels, something different even from the other inspired books, Old Testament and New Testament. Reading and pondering the Gospels, we can have the experience of knowing Jesus as we have never known Him before.

And so here is my suggestion to you. Try to find the time to read each of the four Gospels from beginning to end this Lent. You might start this week with Mark's Gospel since his was the first one to be written, and it is

the shortest. Then continue with Matthew next week and then Luke the following week. In Passiontide – the last two weeks of Lent, the second of which is Holy Week – read the Gospel of John.

When you are finished, a powerful idea may arise in your thoughts about the words that God the Father spoke in today's Gospel. You might say to God the Father in response: "This is your Beloved Son, with whom you are well pleased. I <u>will</u> listen to Him."

Holy Spirit, give us the grace to truly hear the words of Jesus, the Beloved Son of God. Grant that in some way we may bring His words to those who know them less or, perhaps, not at all.

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him."