

Second Sunday of Lent, A – March 1, 2026 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham – 5pm Sat. Vigil; 8:30 & 11am Sunday Masses – 715 words

In listening to and obeying the Lord Jesus, we find our true selves.

But let's see how the readings for this Second Sunday of Lent support this conclusion. Looking at a broader context, Jesus had just polled the disciples in the scene before this about who he was, and Peter confessed the true faith. It was a glorious moment: "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven", Christ responded. But a few verses later, the same Lord was saying to him, "Get behind me, Satan... You are thinking not as God does, but as men do." Then he bid them all to take up their crosses and follow him.

So now we come to the scene of the Transfiguration, where Jesus gives them a glimpse of his glory. Peter again speaks up – evidently he was not easily deterred from his impulsiveness! – and suggests they build tents there, so they can remain in that glorious moment. They hear the voice of the Father who says, "This is my beloved Son... *listen to him.*" But soon, Jesus will be telling him and the others to "rise and be not afraid", as they must descend the mountain and face the reality of the Cross yet again.

Saint Paul in the second reading, for his part, exhorts us to "bear [our] share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God". For "He saved us and called us to a holy life, *not according to our works but according to his own design*". Again, the Church is reminding us about our calling, how we must not presume to define ourselves apart from the Lord who has a plan for us – a plan that often surprises and challenges us, especially when it clashes with our own ambitions.

And the first reading leads us to reflect upon Abram, who, as it said, "went as the Lord directed him". How much this clashes against our cultural self-assuredness, the idea that we can blaze our own trail and decide our own destiny. This season of Lent is calling us to get back to the basics and be led by God – even if, for some of us, at least, we have spent a good amount of our lives on the wrong path. If we had our druthers we should choose an easy way; but God bids us all pass by the way of the Cross.

The older we get, the more we see that the ideas and designs we had when we were younger were not always the best – even as we so confidently and vigorously pursued them at various times, let us say, before we knew better. But maybe we are still holding on to this or that, even as we have grown in other areas. Each of us has an opportunity to open his or her heart to the Lord this Lent and say anew, "Lead me, Lord – I will follow you wherever you go. I trust that your way is best. Lead me, guide me."

And the incredibly beautiful scene with Peter by the seashore, that we will contemplate during Easter, is a good one to think forward to. "Peter, do you love me?" "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." "When you were young, you went where you would. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and lead you where you did not wish to go." Through many struggles with his own desires, with temptation, with allowing others to define him, Peter finally "gave in to God".

Yes, he discovered that God's way for him was best and always had been. In that moment of discovery, whenever his final conversion came about, Peter was "sadder but wiser". But his sadness quickly gave way to joy, for he then embraced fully where God was leading. Our Creator knows us better than we know ourselves; we can never fail in taking up our crosses and following him and his plan. We must never doubt that he can get us to his goal. The Father's voice echoes to us today: "This is my beloved Son... *listen to him!*" And only in listening to him and responding with obedience and faith, will we find our true selves!