

*Readings for the Transfiguration of the Lord*  
*Extraordinary Form*

**2 Peter 1: 16-19**

Dearly beloved, we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, “This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. Moreover, we possess the prophetic message that is altogether reliable. You will do well to be attentive to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

**Matthew 17: 1-9**

At that time, Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, “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.” While he was still speaking, behold, 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.” When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and do not be afraid.” And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, “Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

### ***The Sense of the Sacred***

Transfiguration of the Lord – 2 Peter 1: 16-19 / Mt 17: 1-9  
Ave Maria Catholic Church, August 6, 2023 – Fr. David M. Vidal

Jesus led Peter, James, and John to a high mountain. He was transfigured before them. Then, Peter said: *“Lord, it is good that we are here.”* Let us reflect on the amazement of Peter, that sense of awe before the sacredness of that place. Would Peter’s admiration be ours? Do we truly admire God’s wonders for us?

In his book, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, Cardinal Sarah speaks about the loss of the sense of the sacred.

He says, *“In the West, the disappearance of God has brought in its wake the banishment of everything that is sacred in human life . . . We walk past eminently sacred things without even being gripped by the respect and fear that they inspire . . . In rejecting the presence of the sacred in our lives, we create a uniform, featureless world, a flattened world.”*

*“In a world where everything is on the same level, everything becomes sadly equal. A profane [ordinary], I would even say a profaned [irreverent and abusive], world is a joyless world. Basically, the loss of the sense of the sacred is reason for sadness.”*

#### **Let us reflect first on the nature of the ordinary and flattened world.**

What is this world without God? What are we without God? Without God, the world is not a miracle, the creation of goodness and beauty, but just the evolution of matter. The world without God is a flattened world without a clear origin and a defined end.

In the ordinary world without God, there is no nature that defines what we are, and there are no natural laws that we must obey. In the ordinary and flattened world, everything is malleable, and everything is changeable. In the ordinary world without God, we define ourselves as we wish and set our own laws as if we were the rulers of the world.

However, when that happens, when God is excluded from the world and from our lives, profanity follows. In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul describes this sin of profanity and its punishment:

*“Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse; for although they knew God, they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened . . . Therefore, God handed them over to impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the mutual degradation of their bodies . . . And since they did not see fit to acknowledge*

*God, God handed them over to their undiscerning mind to do what is improper,” (See Romans 1: 20-32).*

Immorality is the profanity of God’s beautiful plan of creation for us. Immorality brings passion and excitement, but certainly, does not bring joy. Immorality only leads to sadness, emptiness, and depression.

### **Second, let us reflect on the profanity of the sacred.**

Those who deny God are not satisfied to profane the world. For them, the sacred must also be profaned. And here again, the profanation of the sacred becomes a progressive movement.

First, the sacred must become ordinary. How many people, and even Catholics, question the beautiful works of art in the Vatican and the Churches in Rome? How many people are scandalized by the costly works that could be sold to assist the poor?

It would be good to remind those who think in that way that there is no originality in that kind of thinking. One of the apostles complained in the same way. When Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus, Judas complained: *“Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor?”* (John 12:5).

Those Churches in Rome, this Church, and all the beautiful Churches around the world, are works of faith. They are extraordinary; however, they are not museums. They are palaces where we meet the King and Lord, Jesus Christ. For this reason, everything is like nothing if we remember for whom they were made. Those who built these holy places not only remembered, but they also knew it.

Now, those who deny God not only want to flatten the sacred, but trample over it. That is when desecration happens; that is when what is irreverent comes into the sacred space. It happens when the mundane and worldly enter into the holy.

### **Let us reaffirm the sense of the sacred!**

It is our responsibility to reaffirm the sense of the sacred.

First, we must marvel at the work of God. We must admire God’s plan for the world and for us. We must praise his wisdom and love and be thankful for the nature He gave us and the laws that He has established. We must have that deep sense of awe because He is the Artist, and we are the clay He has formed with his hands. (See *Jeremiah* 18: 6).

We must not only care for the planet, but we must also respect ourselves, human beings. We must respect our bodies and souls, created to be God's temples. And for that very reason, we must also care for and love our neighbors, the little ones and the old ones, the healthy and the sick. We must respect the sacredness of human life.

Second, we must praise God and worship Him. There must be some place and time in which we put aside all that is mundane and ordinary, and we lift our hearts to what is divine and extraordinary, and the Sacred Liturgy is that place and time.

Saint John Paul II teaches: *"The celebration of the Liturgy . . . must be characterized by a profound sense of the sacred . . . permeated by reverence and by the sense of awe that comes from knowing that one is in the presence of the majesty of God."* (Address to the Congregation for Divine Worship, Sept. 21, 2001).

There is no place for ordinary words, gestures, and music during the Sacred Liturgy. It is because we enter into the extraordinary realm of God. Here, we marvel, admire, and contemplate. And in our amazement, we also say the words of Peter: *"Lord, it is good that we are here."* Let Peter's admiration be ours! Amen.