

LET US ACCOMPANY POPE FRANCIS IN IRAQ THIS WEEK

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT – 28 FEBRUARY 2021



Mosaic of the Transfiguration, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai

Today's homily is in [three](#) parts.

1. [AN INTRODUCTION TO PRAYING FOR THE POPE'S VISIT TO IRAQ](#)
2. [REFLECTING ON TODAY'S GOSPEL OF MARK – THE TRANSFIGURATION](#)
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1. [PRAYING FOR THE POPE'S VISIT TO IRAQ.](#)

This week the international media cover the Journey of Pope Francis to Iraq March 5th – 8th.

With recent rocket attacks in February, market place bombing in January and other issues, [security](#) becomes an important to pray about.

With the prevalence of COVID-19 in Iraq, [health](#) becomes an important issue to pray about.

With the terrible suffering that Christians have faced in Iraq for so long, [the gift of hope](#) becomes an important of our prayer.

With so much division in the Middle East, the [Pope's meeting in Iraq with religious and political leaders](#) becomes an important issue to pray about.

[A STORY TO SHARE THIS WEEK](#)

In the five Dioceses of Queensland and the Australian Catholic University there is a story to share.

A story resulting from prayer and the surprises of God.

The story will be shared this week, as Christian solidarity in health and education in Iraq and settlement of Iraq and Syrian refugee families in Australia become important issues to pray about.

PRAYER NOVENA

As a parish community, we are invited to join a prayer novena from March 1st to March 9th.

The prayer is on the Chaldean Patriarchate.

Thank you to Hanar for translating one of the sentences, not in English, on the website.

THE NOVENA PRAYER

"Lord, we entrust to you Pope Francis' trip to Iraq from 5 March.

*May your Holy Spirit be in his gestures and words,
and in the hearts of those who meet and listen to him,
so that the gifts of encouragement, consolation,
encounters between different ethnic groups,
cultures and religions may spread,
with the commitment to take courageous steps
of reconciliation and collaboration for the common good.*

*We ask you, Lord, to grant the church in Iraq
comfort, light and strength
so that she keeps sewing the bonds
of brotherhood and peace.*

*Lord, free Iraq and the countries of the Middle East
from hatred and violence".*

ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, YEAR SIX

Year Six have also written their own prayer for this Friday.

And at the baptisms of children yesterday in our church, a candle was lit for the Pope's journey to Iraq.

At all Masses this weekend we pray for Iraq.

2. GOSPEL OF MARK 9:2-10 – THE TRANSFIGURATION

Jesus was on a journey.

He was travelling on the **WAY** to Jerusalem to the **CROSS**.

An essential part of the journey was the need to pray.

Jesus chose Peter, James and John to accompany him.

They ascended the mountain together,

and came to the moment of transfiguration, of prayer.

What a powerful, intense time of prayer and revelation.

So many thoughts and feelings must have been within Peter and James and John.



for printable version click on image

In fact, it is such a big event that it was beyond their understanding.

The Gospel tells us that the three were terrified, and Peter, actually speaks, while not knowing what to say.

The event was so powerful, so beyond their current understanding, that they continued to discuss it among themselves.

Let us listen to the first passage of the Gospel passage slowly, allowing us to feel the wonder, the sacredness, and the experience of being overwhelmed.

“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.”

We can be arrogant when we think that we fully understand all that God does in our lives.

Like Peter we can even talk about it, not knowing what to say.

Like today’s Gospel, we need time to grow in our understanding of the very depth of God’s love and passion for us.

Lent is such a time to grow in reflection.

Let us continue with the Gospel passage, as it becomes even more wondrous.

*“Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, **‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’** Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.*

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.”

SACRED MOMENTS

There are those sacred and key moments in our lives when God reveals to each of us, our purpose in life, and deepens our relationship to God.

In Mark 1:11 was the Baptism of Jesus when God said

*“And a voice came from heaven,
‘You are my Son, the Beloved: and with you I am well pleased.’”*

In today’s Gospel is Mark 9:7 within the Transfiguration of Jesus, we hear

*“Then a cloud overshadowed them,
and from the cloud there came a voice,
‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’”*

And several chapters later in Mark 15:39 is the death of Jesus, when the centurion begins to understand Jesus.

*“Now when the centurion, who was facing him,
saw that in this way he breathed his last,
he said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’”*

PONDERING SACRED MOMENTS & IMAGINING

We take time this week to ponder such moments in our lives:

- A moment of grace, of depth, of insight into God’s love for you
- A moment of being loved so, so deeply by God
- A moment when you know with all your heart that you are beloved
- A changing moment in your life’s journey

We are invited to allow God to give us the courage to name the realities of our lives.

We read the Gospel passage again, imagining that we are one of the three friends of Jesus. We note what God says to us.

A word, a phrase, an image, a feeling.

[pause]

Now we reflect in which ways

- we are graced by God,
- we discover God’s intention and mission for us,
- and we name the moments of God’s transfiguring love in our lives.

3. ACCOMPANYING POPE FRANCIS IN IRAQ - MARCH 5th – 8th in IRAQ

The third part of the homily is a series of brief reflections which will be released daily from Monday 1st March to Tuesday 9th March.

For example:

On the day Pope Francis visits UR, we reflect on GENESIS 11:31-12:9 and the importance of Ur as a symbol of interfaith consultation and cooperation.

On the day Pope Francis visits MOSUL, we reflect on the two Old Testament books

of JONAH and NAHUM which speak of Nineveh (Mosul).
We recall the terrors of ISIS between 2014-17 around Mosul,
and the major efforts needed today to rebuild trust.

From March 1st – 4th our reflections include our relationship in Australia to the Church in Iraq. These include education, health, mission, refugee settlement and prayer.

From March 5th – 7th the reflections concentrate on the significance of the religious sites and major religious and secular meetings during the Pope's visit.

On March 8th we pray for the Pope's journey home, and recall significant moments.

On March 9th we pray for the Church in Iraq and the nation of Iraq.

We pray the official Novena Prayer each day from March 1st to March 8th.

Let us conclude with a brief prayer this Sunday.

A PRAYER FOR IRAQ

We pray to You, Loving God
for the safety of Pope Francis
and all the people that he meets in Iraq.
We pray that the events of March 5th – 8th
will be graced with moments
of God's transfiguring love in their lives.
We pray for the gifts of hope and genuine peace.
Amen.

Fr Gerry

readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022821.cfm>