

**March 5, 2023 2<sup>nd</sup> week of Lent**

**Gospel of Matthew - chapter 17 verses 1-9**

*Homily by Deacon Tony*

Upon listening to this Gospel the opening line of , “He led them up a high mountain,” immediately caught my attention. Not all that long ago, we would gather with family and friends once a year and go camping to Fish Creek Pond. It’s a beautiful campground nestled between Tupper Lake and Saranac Lake. At some point at my wife’s urging, she decided it would be great exercise for the group to begin tackling the Saranac Six. Now the Saranac Six are a series of mountains, ranging from Lake Placid down to Tupper Lake. Each with its own varying degree of difficulty.

One I remember quite vividly was Ampersand. It is 3500 feet above sea level and is 2.5 miles one way. It starts off innocently enough. Lulls you into thinking I have this, no problem. And then it quickly turns. The incline steepens. The terrain becomes more rugged as you navigate over loose rocks which can become slippery. The reason is at most times you are climbing up the dry creek bed that runs down from the top of the mountain. And God help you and you pick the wrong day, and it starts to rain. It will wash you down the mountain! At times you have to use your hands to grab onto exposed tree roots, yes tree roots, to pull you up. And just when you think it can’t get any steeper-it does!!! If that is even possible! But once you clear the tree line and reach the summit, the view is breathtaking. You have an unobstructed 360 degree panoramic view of the entire region.

This weekend we enter into the second week of Lent. And I’m certain when we all began this journey with Jesus into the desert, we were committed, determined and focused. That whatever we gave up or added to our lives to get closer to Christ, we have this. No problem.

But now I want you to imagine Jesus standing beside his Father in Heaven. Jesus has his hands clasped and he is looking down on us at St Paul’s right now. When he turns to his Father and says, Father, I pray they listened to the opening line.

You see, Jesus didn't take Peter, James and John down a stroll into the meadow where he revealed to them his glory. No, no, no. You see Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain and not just any mountain, but a high mountain where they had to struggle. Where at times there was rugged terrain and loose rocks. Where at times perhaps they had to use their hands to pull themselves up. Maybe they experienced shortness of breath with the altitude change as they climbed and certainly they had to be bruised and scraped up. They were climbing a mountain in sandals! But when they reached the summit, they were treated to an unobstructed view of God's Glory.

Yet it was not without struggle that Peter, James, and John were able to see God's Glory. They were committed, determined, and focused. And one thing they had, was Jesus physically leading them up the mountain, so they kept their eyes focused on Jesus.

So, the message for us this second week of lent is to stay committed, stay determined and stay focused. For when the Cross of Christ begins to get heavy as it will, the further we move into Lent, and you feel yourself beginning to waver in whatever it is you gave up or added to your life to get closer to Christ. Remember this, the Cross of Christ is not getting heavier, it's Satan pushing down on it as he does not want you to succeed. He does not want you to get closer to Christ.

PRESS ON

And when you feel your starting to slip as temptations try to trip you up, keep your eyes focused on Christ like Peter, James and John did.

AND PRESS ON

And when the incline starts to steepen and you feel as if you can't carry the cross not one step further, know you are now climbing the hill to Golgotha where they crucified our Lord.

PLEASE PRESS ON

For on that Sunday morning when you reach the Easter summit. The victory is ours, won by Jesus. He has defeated Satan and destroyed the power of death. And now my friends, we are treated to an unobstructed view of the Glory of our God!

AS THE RISEN CHRIST