

# 03-01 Lecture: The Transfiguration, Lent, and Cultivating Expectant Faith

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Date Time: 2026-03-01 10:14:58

Location: Saint Barbara

Instructor: [Fr. James Northrop]

## Summary

This lecture, delivered on March 1, 2026, during the second week of Lent, centers on the Transfiguration and its relevance to daily spiritual life. The speaker emphasizes that God grants moments of grace, insight, and consolation to strengthen believers for upcoming trials, just as He did for the apostles before the crucifixion. Key themes include cultivating “expectant faith” through intentional preparation for Mass and the sacraments, rather than slipping into complacency like the Pharisees. The lecture shows how hardships can be “transfigured” through prayer—using Joseph’s story and personal anecdotes to illustrate that understanding often follows suffering. The speaker underscores the importance of spiritual friendship for accountability and warns against getting stuck in past consolations (“building booths”) instead of moving forward. The session concludes with a meditation on perseverance, urging believers to take the next step with God even when the path is difficult.

## Knowledge Points

### 1. The Transfiguration and Expectant Faith

- **Purpose of Spiritual Consolations**
  - The Transfiguration reminds believers that God provides everything needed to live a devout life.
  - God offers specific moments of “transfiguration”—insight, grace, and consolation—to fortify faith. These moments serve as a “boost” or “shot in the arm” to keep believers from being overwhelmed by hard times or the “cross” that follows.
  - Core message: the cross always leads to the resurrection.
- **Avoiding Complacency (The “Know-it-all” Attitude)**
  - The speaker warns against the Pharisees’ mindset—thinking they know and control everything—which blocks openness to God’s surprises.
  - Believers are urged to stay attentive to God’s action and avoid becoming “boring and stale” in their faith.
- **Practical Preparation for Sacraments**

- **Example:** On Friday, February 27, 2026, at a funeral in Kirkland, the speaker noticed St. Thomas Aquinas's preparation and thanksgiving prayers taped to the sacristy counter. They helped the presiding priest avoid taking the privilege of celebrating Mass for granted.
- **Application:** Prepare for Mass rather than arriving passively. Read the readings ahead of time or use resources like *The Word Among Us* (available at Saint Aloysius), *Magnificat*, or *Daily Bread*.
- **Goal:** Arrive with "expectant faith," explicitly inviting the Lord to speak and surprise you.

## 2. Transfiguring Life Experiences

- **Finding Meaning in Hardship**
  - Do not immediately judge painful experiences as purely negative. Through grace and prayer, they can be transfigured.
  - **Biblical Example:** Joseph in Genesis faced betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment. Understanding came later, when he saw those events were necessary for God's plan.
  - **Concept:** Understanding often lags behind experience.
- **The "Golden Easter Egg"**
  - **Personal Anecdote:** A friend challenged the speaker about a past trauma, asking if he had discovered why God allowed it. He admitted he hadn't yet (still "wallowing in self-pity"). Another friend uses the image of a "Golden Easter egg" hidden in every situation, waiting to be found.
  - **Process:** Take traumatic experiences to prayer rather than turning away. In time, God reveals how He works all things for good.

## 3. Spiritual Companionship

- **The Necessity of Community**
  - Faith is not a solo journey; God places people in our lives to help us walk with Him.
  - **Personal Story:** The speaker remembered a friend who died on Thursday, February 26, 2026, from diabetes complications. They spent hours discussing theology and life at IKEA (where the speaker gets free coffee as a family member).
  - **Role of Friends:** Spiritual friends reveal blind spots (rash judgments), provide accountability ("kick in the pants"), and offer encouragement. They can catalyze "transfiguration" by shifting perspectives.

## 4. Moving Forward vs. Stagnation

- **"Building Booths" (Stuck in Consolation)**

- Referencing Peter’s desire to build three booths at the Transfiguration, the speaker warns against trying to stay in a past moment of consolation or recreate a blessed event.
- **Ignatian Wisdom:** St. Ignatius of Loyola taught that consolations prepare us for desolation; they are not meant to be permanent.
- **Personal Example:** The speaker was miserable in his first years of seminary because he tried to recreate his college experience instead of embracing the new environment.
- **The Ongoing Journey**
  - **Scriptural Warning:** “Do not say, how is it that former times were better than these?” This question doubts God’s goodness and ignores that life is a journey with necessary ups and downs.
  - **Closing Meditation:** God delights in our desire to live close to Him but does not always grant instant spiritual riches. The call is simply to “take the next step” and cling to God’s hand, even when the walk feels slow and heavy—promising “sparkling surprises just around the bend.”

## Questions

- [Insert Question/Confusion]

## Next Steps

- Develop preparation rituals for Mass and prayer (e.g., read the scriptures beforehand; use resources like *The Word Among Us*, *Magnificat*, or *Daily Bread*) to cultivate expectant faith.
- Pray through hardships: bring difficult or traumatic experiences to prayer, asking God to reveal the “Golden Easter egg” or purpose in His time.
- Cultivate spiritual friendships: engage with friends who can discuss faith deeply, provide accountability, and offer encouragement.
- Resist nostalgia: avoid “building booths” by trying to recreate past spiritual highs; focus on taking the next step in the present journey.