



## PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY TO THE PONTIFICAL GOOD FRIDAY HOLY LAND COLLECTION

*Second Sunday of Lent:*

### **JESUS' MESSAGE** – *“BE NOT AFRAID!”*

Each Second Sunday of Lent, we hear about the Transfiguration of Our Lord and this year the Gospel story comes from Matthew. According to tradition, the place of the Transfiguration is Mount Tabor, a solitary mountain that rises over 1600 feet in the lower Galilee region. Atop of the mountain is the Basilica of the Transfiguration, highlighted by its twin towers, double altars, and gorgeous mosaics of the Transfiguration. The Basilica of the Transfiguration is owned and maintained by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, who receives financial support from the Good Friday Collection that is taken up in parishes all over the world. Pilgrims to the Holy Land take a wild taxi ride up the mountain and then are blessed with the sight of the beautiful basilica and the incredible views of the Judean countryside.

Matthew tells us that Jesus took Peter, James and John up a high mountain to pray. Before their eyes, Jesus's face and garments became dazzling white and Moses and Elijah joined him in conversation. The disciples were awe-struck. Peter wanted to build three tents, so they could stay on the mountaintop and prolong this incredible experience. The Gospel story continues with another miraculous appearance – this time of a cloud that overshadows Jesus and a voice is heard saying: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased; listen to him” (Mt 17:5). On hearing this voice, the disciples were struck with fear and fell to the ground. But Jesus came to console them and told them not to be afraid.

We hear those words many times in the Scriptures – “Be not afraid.” Yet, how often do we put aside Jesus' reassuring words and succumb to our fears – worries about families, jobs, the economy, and violence and division in our communities, country and the world today? The Christians in the Holy Land are no different. And they have even greater reasons to fear about their livelihoods and well-being than many of us do.



*The mosaic that adorns the interior dome of the Church of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor*

They are a significant minority in the land where Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again to save us all from our sins. Their fears of not being able to support their families and of being targets of violence and persecution are well founded. Sadly, many have succumbed to their fears and have left the Holy Land even though their ancestors were the first Christians who came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah they had longed and waited for.

In the Gospel story of the Transfiguration, we can find a remedy for their fears. Jesus consoled the disciples in their time of fear and trepidation and we can do the same for the Christians in the Holy Land by being generous with our prayers, fasting and almsgiving for the Pontifical Good Friday Collection this Lent that supports the apostolates of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

### HELP FOR HOLY LAND CHRISTIANS

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