

## Second Sunday of Lent: On Being Transfigured

The Transfiguration of the Lord. This event is so mystical that a word had to be made up to name it. *Transfiguration*, the Church used this word to describe how Jesus' appearance was changed on that holy mountain. *His face shone as the sun, and His clothes became dazzling white.* Was this a glimpse of what Jesus looks like when He takes His place at the Right Hand of the Father in heaven? Are we getting a taste of the Trinity? Perhaps. *The Book of Revelation* also attempts to give us a picture of the Lord in His Glory, but these are the visions the prophet had of heaven, not the concrete changing of the Lord from physical into mystical on a mountain in Palestine.

Two other figures appear. The disciples clearly understand that these figures are Moses and Elijah. Moses is the Giver of the Law, the Word of God for the ancient Hebrews. Elijah is the greatest of the prophets. His prophecy made it quite clear that there was only one God, and that God was in control of the universe. They spoke with Jesus about God's plan. Mankind, Adam, by his own choice, was in the grasp of the evil one. The devil reigned on earth. Mankind was quite happy to continue the original sin of pushing God aside, and then suffering the consequences of living without love, without hope, for eternity. People still do this. We still do this when we sacrifice eternal happiness for the power and pleasure of the material. God would put an end to the devil's hold on mankind by using the evil one's own weapons against him. He would defeat disobedience with obedience. He would defeat hatred with love. He would defeat death with death. The death of Jesus would be one of complete obedience to the Father and total love for His people. Heaven would be opened up due to the cross.

Peter, James and John were there. They were the reason that Jesus was transfigured. We are the reason that Jesus was transfigured. The transfiguration took place so they and we could realize that the passion and death of the Lord was all part of His plan to redeem his people from evil. Jesus' way was the only way to peace, to happiness, to eternity. ***"This is my Beloved Son, Listen to Him,"*** the voice thunders from heaven. The Voice of God thunders for us to listen, to obey, to follow Jesus Christ.

They wanted to stay on that mountain, the three disciples. They even had a plan. They would construct three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. They did not want the mystical experience to end. Nor do we. Nor should we. We have been ushered into the mystical. We feel the presence of God in so many ways, in so many times in our lives. Perhaps it is during a retreat. Perhaps it is during the Holy Week Liturgies. Perhaps it is when we look at a baby and feel God's goodness all around us. Perhaps it is when we reflect on a challenge, a crisis we have experienced in our lives and realize that Jesus was carrying us and still is carrying us. I remember one evening of the Life Teen Leadership Retreat in Kansas a few years ago when there was a Eucharistic adoration that would last overnight. Those of us leading our Teens wanted to meet to discuss the day as we always do. But the Teens

did not want to leave the Abbey church. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life, not just the experience of the Eucharistic Adoration, but the experience of being with young people who in a very real way were transfigured before the Blessed Sacrament.

We do not want to leave the mystical presence of the Lord. Nor should we. In fact, we join Peter and James and John not just to enjoy the experience of the Transfiguration, but to bring this experience to others and to bring others to this experience.

This is what we mean by the priesthood of the faithful. A priest brings God to others and others to God. The ordained priest does this through the sacraments. The lay priest, you folks, do this by sharing your faith with those around you. This sharing of the faith is far more than explaining Church doctrines and dogmas. Sharing the faith means bringing people to the wonder of the mystical. We do this by remaining united to the Lord. If we cannot bring other people to the Mountain of the Transfiguration, then we can bring the Mountain of the Transfiguration to them.

That is why it is so important for us to grow in our spiritual lives. We cannot be satisfied with just attending Church on Sunday. We need to seek ways to be united to Christ throughout our day. We need to schedule daily prayer. We need to have some quiet time with God. And then, and only then, we can take the joy of our union to others. When we are united to God, growing in our faith, we can bring the Mountain of the Transfiguration to those who are seeking eternal meaning amid the frustrations of the world.

This is, after all, what Lent is about. Lent is about changing our lives, and growing closer to God so we can fulfill the Lord's command to bring His Gospel, His Good News, to the ends of the earth.

The disciples did not want to leave the Mountain of the Transfiguration. Nor do we. We do not have to leave the mountain. We just have to create that space in our lives for us and Jesus and know, as the *Gospel of Matthew* concludes, that He is with us always.