

## Feast of the Transfiguration: Our Part in the Plan

Recently, I had lunch with a number of college students. Out of the blue, one of the young ladies asked me, "So what's life all about, Father? What wisdom do you have to give us?" Her voice was a bit confrontational. Even still, the answer came to me without any reflection at all. I just told her, "Life is about Jesus Christ. Anything and everything that matters flows from Him and returns to Him."

This is the fundamental message of Christianity. It is exemplified in today's feast: The Transfiguration of the Lord.

When Jesus brought Peter, James and John up that mountain, he met with Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elijah! These were two of the most important people of the Hebrew Scriptures. Moses was the great Law Giver. The first five books of the Bible, the Torah, were attributed to Moses. Elijah was the greatest of the prophets. He was the prophet who never died, but was taken up into heaven by the fiery chariot of God. Malachi had prophesied that Elijah would come again. Many believed that he had returned in the person of John the Baptist.

And there, on that mountain, the disciples witnessed Jesus meeting with Moses and Elijah. Why? Why did they meet? What could they have been discussing? Perhaps it was the way that the Father's Plan would be fulfilled in the Son. Certainly the voice from heaven told the disciples what they needed to hear, "This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him."

And so we go back to that quick answer to the college student. Jesus Christ is the center of history. He is the center of the universe. Everything that matters flows from Him and points to Him. He is the one who fulfills God's plan for mankind.

We have to listen to Him because we also have a role in God's plan for mankind. That meeting with Moses and Elijah had transcended time. Moses probably lived six hundred years before Elijah, and Elijah probably lived eight hundred years before the Incarnation of the Lord. But on that mountain they were united in time. It was as though all that Moses gave, all that Elijah prophesied, was happening in the eternal now of the Word Become Flesh. We are part of that Eternal Now. "This is my Beloved Son. Listen to Him." Those words are directed to us as well as to Peter, James and John.

But why? Why are we included in the Transfiguration? We are included because each of us has a role to play in God's Plan for mankind. One of the great statements attributed to our late great pope, Pope Benedict XVI, is: "The world offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort, you were made for greatness." We were created for greatness, to share in the Triumph of the Kingdom.

How? How do we share in the Triumph of the Kingdom? We do this by reflecting the presence of God in that unique way that we were created to do. Each of

us can provide the world with an image of God the world never saw before and will never see again. We can and must do this. That is why we need to be united to God in every aspect of our lives and at every moment of our lives.

*"It was not by way of cleverly concocted myths that we taught you about the coming in power of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were eyewitnesses of his sovereign majesty. We ourselves heard the voice from heaven say 'This is my beloved son on whom my favor rests' while we were in his company on the holy mountain."*

This passage is from today's second reading taken from the *Second Letter of Peter*. It was written towards the end of Peter's life while he was a captive in Rome. Peter was aware that some people were leaving Christianity. They were attracted by some very strange stories, half Christian and half pagan. Among these stories were the stories of the Gnostics. The Gnostics taught that there was a secret seed that was implanted into their heads. If you didn't believe them it was because you didn't have the secret seed of knowledge in your head. The word *gnostic* means a secret knowledge. Gnosticism was so confusing that most people couldn't figure out anything about it other than it was strange. For that reason it had an attraction to many people. In some ways it was similar to modern day Scientology, a secret society based on fabricated stories.

St. Peter's message to the Christians of his time and ours is to stop looking for fantastic stories and believe the accounts of the eyewitnesses of the Lord. Many refuse to listen to this message. Fantasy seems so interesting. All of us have enough of the science fiction buff in us that we want to believe strange stories. We want to believe in flying saucers and underwater cities and dragons and unicorns. There is an enormous attraction in a fantasy. But this attraction can be destructive. It can lead to us denying our faith.

Fantasy can easily replace reality. The Lord is real. He is right before us. The Hebrew Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets, predicted his coming. The disciples witnessed his coming. What Peter wrote, simply enough, is that it is time for us to stop looking. Jesus is the One.

We are called to have faith that the Jesus the apostles saw is the Son of the God that we cannot see. The One we learn about in Scripture is the Eternal Word. Our faith is based not on intellectual curiosities but on the testimony of Sacred Scripture and the witness of the apostles.

We focus on the Lord. We experience His Presence within us. And we proclaim to the world: God is real. Jesus Christ is real. All that matters is that which flows from the Lord and returns to Him.

To the extent that we make this proclamation with our lives, to that extent we are participants in God's plan for mankind.