

Luke 9:28b-36

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up the mountain to pray. While He was praying, His face changed in appearance and His clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with Him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His exodus that He was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. As they were about to part from Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here: let us make three tents, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying. While He was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then, from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my chosen Son; listen to Him.” After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection Questions

- 1) *The Context:* A) The story of the Jesus' Transfiguration appears almost at the middle of Luke's gospel giving us a sense of a climactic turning point. Immediately before the story of the Transfiguration, we have Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah and Jesus telling the disciples that He must suffer, die and be resurrected. The sacrificial nature of discipleship is fully spelled out for the disciples and they are not ready to hear it. Directly following, we have the Transfiguration which reminds all disciples that at the end of the road lay glory for Jesus and His disciples.

- 2) The location of the mountaintop has more theological significance than geographical. Mountaintops were places where God spoke directly to His law-giver, Moses and His most outstanding prophet Elijah. What is your "mountaintop" where you go to speak with God and to be spoken to by God? (your bedroom? Your car? The bathroom? A favorite chapel?) How can you carve out more time to spend there during this Lenten season?

- 3) Jesus takes with Him, Peter, James and John, His inner circle. (Mk. 9:2). These are the same three whom Jesus chose to be present with Him at the healing of Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:49-56), and during His apocalyptic prophecies (Mk 13:3), and at Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46, Mk 14:33). Jesus chooses these three to witness this astounding event for a reason. What might that reason (or reasons be)? What kind of effect does the strength, the quality of our faith and our spiritual maturity have upon what we are able to see and consequently the strength of our witness?

- 4) Take a look at Exodus 24:9,16, 34, and Exodus 33:17-23, Exodus 34:30 and compare them to Luke 9:35 and Luke 9:37-43. What are the parallels you see between Moses' time on the mountain and Jesus' time there with His three disciples?

- 5) The text tells us that Jesus is "transfigured" coming from the Greek word "metemorphothe", meaning utterly changed or transformed. The difference is so dramatic, it can be compared to the way in which a caterpillar metamorphoses into a butterfly. How would such a dramatic transformation both startle and encourage? How might such a demonstration be necessary to the three main disciples in order to help them endure what they are about to see in the future (e.g. watching Jesus' suffering and death and later experiencing their own)? How have our own "mountaintop" experiences helped us to endure a cross later? How

does knowing that our final destination is glory with Christ help us to bear our crosses with grace, love and dignity?

6) Peter seems to be the man with a plan. We can almost hear him saying: 'Let's just stay here forever and build a tabernacle for each of you. Let's capture this moment and make it last forever.' This is typical Peter in all of his zeal and impulsiveness. We can relate. When something extraordinary happens, we want to bottle the experience and preserve it forever. When have you done this? What was the result? There is something else going on here as well; Peter's suggestion could be taken as strangely prophetic. Peter wants them to build 3 *skenas*; booths or tabernacles in which Jews dwell to observe the Feast of Booths (Lev. 23:42-44) commemorating the Exodus wanderings of the Israelites in the desert. All the disciples and Jesus are about to undergo a 'desert' experience as they watch Jesus become marginalized, tortured, suffer and die. The disciples had their mountaintop experience and each other. What role does community play in your life to help you get through the desert times? The Feast of Booths also took on an eschatological tone as people looked ahead to the glorious day of Israel's deliverance. Peter's seemingly nutty suggestion also seemed to have some profound implications. When have you reflected upon someone else's seemingly 'off the wall' suggestion and discovered some wisdom in it?

7) During the transfiguration, Jesus says nothing, but His Father speaks in a loud voice from the cloud. "This is my beloved Son; Listen to Him!" What does it mean for you to listen to Jesus? What keeps us from listening to Him? (e.g. fear, not enough time in prayer, listening more to competing voices of our culture, media.... friends).

8) The final verse of this passage tells us that the disciples "fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen". But they will speak openly about it later at the time of the resurrection. Clearly the transfiguration foreshadows the victory of Christ's resurrection over evil, sin and death. We, as disciples in the 21st Century, have the benefit of knowing some of the awesome victories of the resurrection. In what ways can we be tempted to have the same fears and confusion as the first disciples who did not fully know the 'end of the story' as we do? When are we most susceptible to falling into this temptation?