

Matthew 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Him. Then Peter said to Jesus;

“Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for You, one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said;

“This is My Son, the Beloved; with Him I am well pleased;
Listen to Him!”

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions

- 1) ***The Context***: In the transfiguration, Jesus chooses *the time*, the *place* and the *people*. Each of these has its own significance. The time; six days after having had a very intense discussion with his disciples about His suffering and death (Matt. 16:22-23); Peter promises to save Jesus from His fate and Jesus rebukes Peter for suggesting such a thing. Now six days later (paralleling the six days that the cloud covered Mount Sinai before Moses ascended it (Ex. 24:16), Jesus at this point chooses to reveal His *glorified state* only to a select number of His disciples. How do you relate to the timing of these events? Has God ever shown you the victory of His resurrection power in the midst of your despair? When?
- 2) Jesus carefully selects *the place*, “up the high mountain, by themselves”. This is a place carefully selected for this time, this event and these people. It is a place set apart. Has Jesus ever led you to a place (literal or figurative) in your life that seemed so remote that you could not imagine any purpose in it? What did He reveal to you in the remote place? Who was with you?
- 3) Jesus also intentionally selects *particular people* who will witness this event. Three people (according to Jewish law) were a competent number to testify as credible witnesses to an event later. Even though Christ specifically requested that they not say anything immediately after the event, these three will make very credible witnesses after the death and resurrection of Christ. This set of three, Peter, James and John, were consciously chosen by Jesus to witness this event. These are the same three, that Jesus asked to be with Him when He raised the girl from the dead (Mark 5:37), and the same group accompanied Him with at the garden of Gethsemane. What are some of the reasons that Jesus chose these particular three to be with Him at these times? What does this say about strong faith and friendship with Him? What does this tell us about our desire to be with Him in the glorious moments as well as the toughest moments?
- 4) “He was transfigured before them.” The word “transfigured here literally means “Metamorphosed”. The change happens with light reminding us of Psalm 104:1b-2 “O, Lord, You are very great! You cover Yourself with Light as a garment!” Jesus’ shining face must have reminded the disciples of the story of Moses who, after having met with God had a face so radiant with light that others could not look upon it. (Exod. 34:29). Inevitably they would make this connection and associate the transformation in Light with the touch of the Creator and special association with the Creator. How are we “transfigured”

each time we have an encounter with God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit? How is God calling us to allow ourselves to be transfigured so that He might have a chance to touch others through us?

- 5) Why Moses and Elijah? Moses represents the law and Elijah represents the prophets (both of which Jesus embodies perfectly; God's Law of Love and the embodiment of the prophetic living Word of God). Both Moses and Elijah were prophets who were initially rejected by the people but were later vindicated by God. What might Jesus be trying to reveal to His disciples and to us by appearing with these two? Each of us knows what it is like to desire to share in Christ's crown. We also know that the road to the crown will be filled with crosses. Let us take time this Lent to ask Jesus to help us identify the graces we need (and give us the courage and trust to ask for those graces) in order to carry the crosses that lead to the crown.
- 6) Peter offers to make tents for each of them in order to make the experience real; more permanent. Possibly in order to avoid going down the mountain back to the ordinary? In what ways are we tempted to enshrine our "mountain-top" experiences in attempts to prolong them, to live there, or avoid the mundane and the difficult? How do we bring our mountain-top experiences to others?
- 7) God speaks from the cloud, reminding us of Moses' experience on Mount Sinai, where the cloud covered the mountain (Ex. 24:15-17). The words that God speaks remind us of Jesus Baptism (Mat. 3:17) with the added words "listen to Him". If Jesus is fully pleasing to God and completely loved by Him, these things alone might imply that we are to listen attentively to His teachings. In what ways do we listen to Jesus? In what ways are we tempted to avoid listening to certain aspects of His teachings? In what ways do we experience ourselves as "beloved of God" or pleasing to Him?
- 8) When the disciples hear God's voice, they fall to the ground in fear. Fear is a common response to a human interaction with God. No one desires to cultivate a 'servile fear' of God, but a sense of Holy Awe of the Lord and His power is foundational to a sound spiritual life. ("the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" says Proverbs). How is 'Holy Awe' an aspect of your spirituality? How does it help you grow in wisdom and in courage? (e.g, fearing/trusting the Lord above all else, helps us to courageously face everything in our path)
- 9) Jesus compassionately touches them, responds to their fear and invites them to stand. How has Jesus' compassionate touch transformed your fears into faith?
- 10) Jesus orders them to tell no one until after He has risen. Why that timing? In what way(s) is that timing essential to the mission?