

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Mar 16th 2014

In today's Gospel, Jesus takes Peter, James and John, his closest friends, up to the top of a mountain. There, "he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light." And in the midst of this extraordinary event, "Moses and Elijah appeared to them" talking with Jesus. Moses and Elijah!

Peter, fumbling for the right words in the face of this profound experience says, "Lord, it is good that we are here" and offers to set up tents for the visitors. Peter loves being there and wants it to last, and would love to have Moses and Elijah set up camp right here in front of him.

But the next thing they know, a shadow falls, they can't see and a voice from the cloud declares, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." The terrified disciples fall on the ground until Jesus, standing alone, touches them and tells them not to be afraid. Everything is gone. There is no one there but Jesus.

We are so like the disciples. We might have the grace of a profound faith experience that lifts us out of our daily lives: a liturgy that transports us, a retreat that gives us new life or a piece of music that seems to fill our souls. We want to build a tent right there and stay there on that mountain top, leaving our "regular life" down below. "This," we tell ourselves, "THIS is where we belong, so close to God."

We faith tell us that the bread and wine are transfigured into the body and blood of Christ, and we believe that we, too, are transfigured into being Christ for others in the world – in all parts of our lives. There are times we can see clearly how sacred our marriages are, how wonderful our lives as parents are and our roles in families. But eventually, the shadow comes over our vision and we are lost and frightened and wonder how we can get back on that mountain, back to the good stuff, the sparkling images of glory that captivate us.

Jesus calls us clearly in our lives as Christians to live out our lives in that darkness, not always seeing the grace in our daily lives.

In the first reading, God tells Abram to leave his homeland for a place God would lead him to – not a place he can see first or understand until he gets there. Then, God promises "I will bless you ... so that you will be a blessing." We are called to be a blessing to others, even though we don't understand what it is we are doing or where we are heading.

In the darkness and confusion, if we listen in the silence of our hearts, it is there, the loving touch of the hand of Jesus on our frightened shoulders telling us not to be afraid and the voice of God whispering in our hearts that we are his beloved son or daughter in whom he is well pleased.

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