

2nd Sunday Lent – Transfiguration (Matthew)

In Matthew, as in Mark and Luke, the Transfiguration takes place after Jesus' first Passion Prediction and Peter's refusal to accept a suffering Messiah. The same privileged three who witnessed it, would be present for the prayer in Gethsemane.

The first purpose of the Transfiguration was to **encourage** the disciples to persevere with Jesus by a glimpse of the glorified Christ. The presence of *Moses*, the Law giver, and *Elijah*, the Prophet, confirmed Jesus' mission to fulfil both the Law and the Prophets. Peter who had protested at the first passion prediction, proved his lack of understanding again by his proposal to build three tents. He wanted the vision to last and to withdraw Jesus from this earth.

A voice from a cloud, symbol of the Glory of God, caused Peter and his companions to fall down in fear. They heard again the words spoken at the Baptism of Jesus, which identified him as Son of God and servant of Isaiah. The additional words, "Listen to him" gave Jesus the authority of the "prophet like Moses" who was to come. Peter was not to build tents **but to listen to Jesus**, even when he spoke a message he did not like.

The final section is unique to Matthew. Jesus **touch**ed the disciples and reassured them. This *touch* of Jesus had cured a leper and raised the dead to life. Thanks to this personal contact, the disciples lost their fear and understood Jesus' words about John the Baptist and Elijah as they came down the mountain.

In a way the Transfiguration is about our own Lenten journey up the mountain as we struggle with our own spiritual journey. Eventually we will get to the top at Easter with a better view from the top and we even get to remain for 50 days until Pentecost, when we come down the mountain to Ordinary Time until the next cycle begins.

This Lenten journey is symbolic of our own spiritual journey throughout our life, struggling to climb the mountain of spiritual growth. How successful we are will depend most times on our Lenten journey each year. That is why it is important to pick a discipline that will last beyond Lent.

At the beginning of this season I mentioned reading a good spiritual book from several suggested authors like Richard Rohr, Henry Nouwen, or Ronald Rolheiser among others. All are great authors, but it is not so much important

that we read to finish the book but allow what the author wrote to make us stop and reflect on how it might apply to our own life. In a way, that is the beginning of Contemplative Prayer, where we allow the Holy Spirit to touch us through the writings of a good spiritual writer.

It is these moments of reflection that we draw closer to God through the small commitments we make. Imagine a cozy prayer space in your home where you have a space all to yourself where you can be alone with God with a good spiritual book at your side. And don't let me discourage you from trying this more than once a day

The ideal would be to use the gospels, but that will come. Personally, I would suggest Ronald Rolheiser's book, "The Shattered Lantern," as a starter, or we have plenty of good books that I mentioned in our parish library.