

GOSPEL

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 Moses, and 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.'

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Gospel of this second Sunday of Lent presents the narrative of the Transfiguration of Jesus. Taking aside three of the Apostles, Peter, James and John, He led them up a high mountain. And that is where this unique phenomenon took place: Jesus' face "shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light". In this way, the Lord allowed the divine glory which could be understood through faith in his preaching and his miraculous gestures, to shine within Him. The Transfiguration was accompanied by the apparition of Moses and Elijah who were "talking with him".

The 'brightness' which characterises this extraordinary event symbolises its purpose: to enlighten the minds and hearts of the disciples so that they may clearly understand who their Teacher is. It is a flash of light which suddenly opens onto the mystery of Jesus and illuminates his whole person and his whole story.

By now decisively headed toward Jerusalem, where he will be sentenced to death by crucifixion, Jesus wanted to prepare his own for this scandal — the scandal of the Cross — this scandal which is too intense for their faith and, at the same time, to foretell his Resurrection by manifesting himself as *the Messiah, the Son of God*. Jesus was preparing them for that sad and very painful moment. In fact, Jesus was already revealing himself as a Messiah different from their expectations, from how they imagined the Messiah, how the Messiah would be: not a powerful and glorious king, but a humble and unarmed servant; not a lord of great wealth, a sign of blessing, but a poor man with nowhere to rest his head; not a patriarch with many descendants, but a celibate man without home or nest. It is truly an overturned revelation of God, and the most bewildering sign of this scandalous overturning, is the cross. But it is through the Cross that Jesus will reach the glorious Resurrection, which will be definitive, not like this Transfiguration which lasted a moment, an instant.

Transfigured on Mount Tabor, Jesus wanted to show his disciples his glory, not for them to circumvent the Cross, but to show *where the Cross leads*. Those who die with Jesus, shall rise again with Jesus. The Cross is the door to Resurrection. Whoever struggles alongside him will triumph with him. This is the message of hope contained in Jesus' Cross, urging us to be strong in our existence. The Christian Cross is not the furnishings of a house or adornments to wear but rather, the Christian Cross is a call to the love with which Jesus sacrificed himself to save humanity from evil and sin. In this Lenten season, we contemplate with devotion the image of the Crucifix, Jesus on the Cross: this is the symbol of Christian Faith, the emblem of Jesus, who died and rose for us. Let us ensure that the Cross marks the stages of our Lenten journey in order to understand ever better the seriousness of sin and the value of the sacrifice by which the Saviour has saved us all.

The Blessed Virgin was able to contemplate the glory of Jesus hidden

in his humanness. May she help us stay with Him in silent prayer, to allow ourselves to be enlightened by his presence, so as to bring a reflection of his glory to our hearts through the darkest nights.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Describe one or two of the 'mountaintop experiences' you've had of the Father's presence in your life – when you've deeply known and felt his love. What were your feelings about being in the Father's presence?
- It is through holding onto and trusting in the Father's love during the temptations and the Cross that Jesus comes into his glory. In what ways have you experienced this same journey – trusting that God will bring you through temptation and trial into newness of life?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.