

GOSPEL

MARK 9:2-10

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Rabbi,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus.

As they came down from the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what 'rising from the dead' could mean.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today's Gospel, invites us to contemplate the Transfiguration of Jesus. This episode is related to what had happened six days earlier, when Jesus had revealed to his disciples that in Jerusalem he would "suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mk 8:31). This message led to crisis for Peter and the entire group of disciples, who rejected the idea that Jesus would be scorned by the leaders of the people and then put to death. Indeed they were waiting for a powerful, strong, dominating Messiah, whereas Jesus presented himself as a humble and gentle servant of God, and servant of mankind, who would offer his life in sacrifice, passing by way of persecution, suffering and death. But how could one follow a Master and Messiah whose earthly existence was to end in that way? That is what they

were thinking. And the answer came precisely from the Transfiguration. What is the Transfiguration of Jesus? It is a preliminary Paschal apparition.

Jesus took with him the three disciples Peter, James and John, "and led them up a high mountain"; and there, for a moment, he showed them his glory, the glory of the Son of God. This event of the Transfiguration thus allowed the disciples to confront Jesus' Passion in a positive way, without being overwhelmed. They saw him as he would be after the Passion: glorious. And in this way Jesus prepared them for the trial. The Transfiguration helps the disciples, and us too, to understand that the Passion of Christ is a mystery of suffering, but it is above all a gift of love, of infinite love on Jesus' part. The event of Jesus transfiguring himself on the mountain enables us to better understand his Resurrection. In order to understand the Mystery of the Cross, it is necessary to know ahead of time that the One who suffers and who is glorified is not only a man, but is the Son of God who, with his love faithful to the end, saved us. In this way the Father renews his messianic declaration about the Son, which he had made previously on the bank of the River Jordan after his Baptism, exhorting: "listen to him". The disciples are called to follow the Master with trust, with hope, notwithstanding his death; the divinity of Jesus must be made manifest precisely on the Cross, precisely in his dying "in that way", so that here Mark the Evangelist places in the mouth of the centurion the profession of faith: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39).

Let us now turn in prayer to the Virgin Mary, the human creature transfigured interiorly by Christ's grace. Let us confidently entrust ourselves to her maternal support in order to continue with faith and generosity the journey of Lent.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- The transfiguration assisted the disciples prepare for and understand the crucifixion of Jesus by providing them with hope in the resurrection. Do you experience this same hope when reflecting on this passage?
- This experience also enabled Jesus, in his humanity, to face the challenge of the cross. Share how your faith or a profound experience of Jesus' presence in your life has enabled you to face challenging or difficult circumstances.
- The disciples saw Jesus in a new way, being revealed not only as human but also as Son of God. In what ways has your understanding of Jesus changed over time because of your relationship with him?

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.