

Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

2006

Dn 7:9-10, 13-14

Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

II Pt 1:16-19

Mk 9:2-10

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Perhaps the motto for the Transfiguration could be a popular song of *The Sound of Music*, "Climb Every Mountain."

1. The first act of Christ's public life was to climb a mountain and fast forty days.
2. Again he is recorded as going up a second mountain to pray alone.
3. He went into a third mountain and preached the Sermons on the Mount – the most superb and sublime sermon ever preached, which emasculated the envy of the Jews, the wisdom of the Greeks, the law of the Roman worlds.

But now, the fourth time, he takes these three favorite disciples up Mount Hermon. In temperament, this trio of apostles were impetuous and fiery men, so much so, that Christ himself had dubbed James a "son of thunder" and James, the visionary of the future and the glory of the apocalypse and Peter, "The Rock."

1. James was the first to die – that's probably why he was there.
 2. Peter was the first pope and head of the church – that's probably why he was there.
 3. John was the last to die – a very difficult thing – that's probably why he was there.
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1. All three were present when he raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus.
 2. All three needed to learn the lesson of the Cross. Peter vehemently protested against the Cross. He wanted a popular Superstar, not a suffering superstar. John and James had been throne-seekers.
 3. All three would later on sleep in the Garden of Gethsemane during His agony.
 4. All three had to be taught that to believe in His Calvary, they must see the glory that shone beyond the scandal of the Cross.

Having reached a small plateau near the summit, they knelt to pray when suddenly they saw Jesus suspended in air. On His left stood Moses – Moses of the Ten Commandments – the bearer of the Law and on His right, Elias – the Prince of the Prophets of the Old Testament and as the apostles started in speechless awe, Moses and Elias – like figures out of focus – began to fade away and, as Sacred Scripture simply states, "They saw no one but Jesus."

If you could choose one line out of all the golden lines in the New Testament could you choose a more forceful one than that? Life can be so complicated. Difficulties from the trivial to the tremendous encircle us.

People and problems of every caliber – bright and dull – direct and devious – saintly and cynical

– touch our lives a dozen times a day. And amid all this, it is so easy to forget the main purpose of life. So many of us are agitated by so many things, we see everything “except” Jesus.

Again Peter was saying like Rip Van Winkle, in effect, “Let’s stay here! This is ever

1. so much better than the dusty roads of our wanderings
2. much better than the hungry crowds
3. and ever so much better than the difficult questions and the troubling cripples
4. better than the blind, the deaf

This is the way religion should be, everything bright and beautiful and cheerful and crystal clear!

You know every Christian is a mountain climber whose vision is conditioned by the heights we struggle. Every Christian is in essence a God-seeker and his pursuits leads inevitably to the ascent of those high hills where alone God is to be found. Each of us finds the mount of Transfiguration early in life as we embark on the Christian life. The world seems like the dawn of creation, all is new, all is great, all is flesh, all things are possible because He made them so. Like the impulsive St. Peter we cry, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. And like the Prince of the Apostles, we long to remain there in the glow of our transfigured Lord for the rest of our lives.

But there is the descent to be made as experience, bit by bit, leads us down to the plains and, not infrequently, to the desert. In the life of any Christian there is more plodding than soaring. It hardly matters what the locale of his labors might be, for the drains upon the spirit which the human condition creates are many. At times the discouragement and sadness which ensue drives us all once more to the foot of the Cross. Calvary is the one height – from which everything is in perspective.

The transfiguration has a double significance.

1. It did something very precious for Jesus.
2. Jesus had to take his own decisions.
3. He had taken the decision to go to Jerusalem and that was the decision to face and accept the Cross.
4. Obviously he had to be absolutely sure that was right before he could go on. On the mountaintop he received a double approval of his decision.

Moses and Elijah met with him. Now Moses was the supreme law giver of Israel. Elijah was the first and the greatest of the prophets.

God spoke with Jesus. As always, Jesus did not consult his own wishes. He went to God and said, “What will you have me do?” He put all his plans and intentions before God. And God said to him, “You are acting as my own beloved Son should act and must act. Go on!” On the mountain of the Transfiguration Jesus was assured that he had not chosen the wrong way. He saw, not only the inevitability, but the essential rightness of the Cross.

Tabor was not the last peak in the mountain range of Christ’s life. There was a fifth mountain – there was Calvary. On this mount again he was lifted off the earth, but this time on a cross. We know that the repentant thief – the first sinner saved by the Cross, is our patron and pioneer and

if we too repent, though our hearts be stained and sordid – the mercy of God will make it clean and shining, a Transfiguration all our own!

Today . . . we should feel good because Christ was symbolically transfigured before us and gives us a glimpse of what is yet to come. And now the dream has faded, and we find ourselves still in the real world. But now we are fortified, we are encouraged, we are strengthened to go out into the valley of life, and to be of service to one another. So today we pray, not for security but for a greater vision and a stouter heart, and the strength to say, “Lord, it is good to be here.”