

Matthew 17:1-9^{viii}

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 loud 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."

^{vi} **About the Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9**

Matthew's account, marked by allusions to Moses' own mountain top encounter with God, links the transfiguration to the final coming of the Messiah as prefigured in the Church. As Matthew tells it, Jesus' transfiguration is primarily a manifestation of who Jesus really is. The promise of his return receives the beginning of its fulfillment in the event of Jesus' death, resurrection and appearance to the disciples.

Peter, overwhelmed by the presence of those most intimately acquainted with God's ways—Moses and Elijah—wishes to enshrine the three and thus capture the revelation. But the voice from heaven redirects their attention to a living, breathing, active person—Jesus. Relationship with God cannot be a static experience of localized worship, but must be as dynamic as attending to the voice of One they love. Moses and Elijah vanish, for the law and the prophets have been fulfilled in what Jesus has done, and Jesus alone remains with them always.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.

^{vii} **Reflection and Response**

As we stand on the threshold of Lent, we find a certain symmetry in today's readings. They look back to the beginning of this season, when King Herod asked the magi about the identity of the mysterious baby

born in Bethlehem. When the voice of God speaks clearly, naming the beloved Son, only a disciple understands.

In the transfiguration account, the mountain setting removed from ordinary concerns is a special place for revelation. The apostles' vision there is accompanied by awe and the desire to stay forever. They are awed by the beauty of God's glory reflected in Christ's face and shining garments. Like Moses, they want to spend a long time on the mountain.

But just as Moses was sent back to a recalcitrant people, so the disciples trudged down the mountain. There they would confront the fractious crowd and a demon-possessed boy whom the other disciples could not cure because of their lack of faith.

Before Lent begins, we might do well to consider questions prompted by today's readings. What mountaintop experiences nurture us, and how can we attain them this Lent? If a retreat, a book, a spiritual director or a time spent in prayer provide us with our glimpse of Christ's face, can we arrange now to provide these sustaining experiences?

And to what are we called when we descend the mountain? What particular part of hurting humanity might we serve this Lent? How can we arrange in advance to translate our faith-filled vision into concrete action?

Quietly consider:

How can I be present to the glory of Christ in my life?

How can I respond to that glory by ministering to Christ's people?