

So far, being a disciple was rather popular and euphoric: Jesus had fed thousands, healed many people and so much more! But just prior to today's gospel, he tells his disciples, for the first time, that he must suffer greatly and be killed. He also spoke of conditions for true discipleship: That the must deny themselves and take up their crosses. One might say it was a real buzzkill.

Then we have two Old Testament heavyweights entering the scene – Moses and Elijah. Yet for the disciples, the transfiguration may have been a bit of a déjà vu story. It felt familiar...

In the Old Testament, when Moses visited with God, like the transfiguration, there would always clouds, signifying God's presence. When Moses descended from the mountain with the Commandments, all are fearful of him, as his face was aglow with the Presence of God, so much so that he had to wear a veil. Moses was the greatest of all the law-giver, who brought God's law to men and women.

Elijah was the greatest of all the prophets and represented all of them. In him, the voice of God spoke to the people with unique directness. He was also ablaze with light when he departed from this world.

It is as if the greatest figures in Israel's history came to Jesus, as he was setting out on the last and greatest adventure into the unknown, and told him to go on. In them, all history rose up and pointed Jesus on his way. Elijah and Moses displayed to the disciples and us that all the plans and promises of God across all the centuries of the Old Testament came down to Jesus Christ.

This light of God didn't descend upon Jesus the way it had upon the Commandments and the face of Moses. It shone out from within him. He is the glory of God! He is the light no darkness can extinguish. Revelation says that in heaven there will be no need of sun or moon because "the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."

The purpose of the Transfiguration was to encourage and strengthen the Apostles who were depressed by their Jesus's prediction of his own Passion and Death.

The Apostles were made to understand that Christ's redeeming work has two phases: The Cross and glory - that we shall be glorified with him only if we first suffer with him.

It is obvious that they still did not understand; but it must surely have given them some little glimmering that the cross was not all humiliation, that somehow it was tinged with glory.

It was as if God were saying to them, "You're going to see and hear all kinds of profoundly confusing things in the days ahead, but do not doubt this for a minute: This is the Son I love, and he is the one you are to listen to. He is the Messiah, and the living Word, no matter what transpires, trust him."

It is the same for us, for when life seems tangled, when nothing seems to work out, when there seems to be no answer for terrible losses, we must hold on that God works all things together for good for those who listen and trust in His Son.

When Peter saw Moses, Elijah, and Jesus all revealed in glory, he thought this was the big ending. It didn't occur to him that this was a temporary situation. He wanted to start a base camp for worship in God's new kingdom, but it wasn't time yet. No Peter, you can't stay on the mountain, but you can remember it as you go back in into the messiness of life, picking up your cross once again and go into the valley.

+The 17th century English poet, John Donne, tells of a man searching for God. He is convinced that God lives on the top of a mountain at the end of the earth. After a journey of many days, the man arrives at the foot of the mountain and begins to climb it. At the same time God says to the angels: "What can I do to show my people how much I love them?"

He decides to descend the mountain and live among the people as one of them. As the man is going up one side of the mountain, God is descending the other side. On reaching the summit, the man discovers an empty mountaintop. Heartbroken, the man concludes that God does not exist. Despite speculation to the contrary, God does not live on mountaintops, deserts, or at the end of the earth, - God dwells among human beings and in the person of Jesus.

Most of the saints experienced great and awesome visions, but they also carried far heavier crosses than any of us. Most of us will not experience such flashy visions like the transfiguration but we will experience those "transfigured moments" that God will let us know He is there for us, whatever our situation.

+I was sitting on the beach with my sister discussing a very difficult situation in our family and how we had all been praying a great deal over this. At that time, three teenagers came and stopped at our chairs. What on the earth? What are they going to hit us up for?

Well, they said hello and introduced themselves and after my asking, they told us their ages: a thirteen-year-old, a fourteen-year-old and a seventeen-year-old. They told us that they were attending a Christian camp where hundreds of kids would rotate throughout the summer. Their duty was beach patrol. I asked their denomination and they simply replied, "We are Christians."

I told them they were in good company, as I was a Roman Catholic priest, though my attire was not exactly convincing. "What are the chances", I thought they must be thinking? "Of all people on the beach, they picked a priest and his sister."

With the sun shining behind them, not intimidated in the least by this revelation, they asked if there was something we would like them to pray for. We told them what we had been discussing and they joined hands and offered the most beautiful of prayers and then walked away. What are the odds of this? God, transfigured before through three teenagers.