

Transfiguration

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[0 : 00] Merciful grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in his beauty. Worship today's call for the day in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The propers for this feast place a primary focus on the amazing event of the Transfiguration, and rightly so.

Also, often when I've read the account of this event, I've tried to imagine what it would have been like to see Jesus transfigured. What would it have been like to see Jesus' divinity show forth through his humanity?

And then to see Moses and Elijah, and then to hear the voice of the Father. Wow. There is nothing that I can equate to this that has happened in my life or probably ever will.

In the Epistle lesson, St. Peter says, He and St. James and St. John were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when such a voice came to him from the excellent glory.

[1 : 18] This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And we heard this voice, which came from heaven. We were with him on the holy mountain.

How could anything that I might experience top this? Now, I've had, at times, as likely we have all had, moments when I felt very close to our Lord.

When I've sensed the presence of his Spirit in a very real manner. For me, it's happened a few times at the altar during Mass, and several times at prayer, especially when praying in the nave. But those times pale in comparison to the Transfiguration. There's likely nothing we will experience quite like it.

If we were to continue on in St. Luke's narrative of this event, we would hear the following. This is St. Luke chapter 9, verses 37 through 40.

[2 : 21] Now, it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met him. Suddenly, a man from the multitude cried out, saying, Teacher, I implore you, look on my son, for he is my only child.

And behold, the Spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him, so that he foams at the mouth. And it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him.

So I implored your disciples to cast it out. But they could not. Jesus did not allow St. Peter, St. John, and St. James to remain on the mountaintop in the spiritual ecstasy of his Transfiguration very long. The very next day, the four of them descended from the mountain into the valley below, where they were immediately greeted with the sickness, the pain, the fear, and the exasperation people have in everyday life.

The point to be made here is this. As it was for Peter, James, and John, we may, on occasion, be given a moment, maybe an evening, maybe even a period of time, when we know the presence of our Lord in a way that is above the norm.

[3 : 46] It may even be spiritually ecstatic, a mountaintop-type experience. But we will not be allowed to stay in those moments.

Jesus won't let us. Why? Because we are of little good to him in those moments. They will be good for us. They will refresh our spirits, yes.

They will encourage us, yes. They can strengthen us, yes. But if we are left there, if we are left on the mountaintop too long, we will likely start to revel in the experience as St. Peter did.

Remember, he wanted to build three tabernacles so we could just stay up here on the mountain and enjoy this experience for a long period of time, sort of a permanent monument to what had happened.

We might even say something dumb like he did. Or worse, we might start chasing those experiences, thinking they are the only time when we are truly experienced the presence of our Lord.

[4 : 57] Jesus won't let us stay in those moments because that is not where we are needed. No. We are needed here in the valley. We are needed here where the people are.

In the valley is where the battle for souls takes place. In the valley is where the lost need to be found. In the valley is where the gospel needs to be preached and lived.

In the valley is where the broken need mending. In the valley is where the fears of others need to be relieved. Here in the valley is where the work of the church takes place.

My brothers and sisters, those times when Jesus brings us up onto a spiritual mountaintop and allows us to see, if you will, his presence more than usual, they're wonderful.

Each time it happens for me at the altar or in prayer, I am grateful. I hope you also are grateful when it happens for you too. But I am also hopeful that we do not seek to stay there.

[6 : 14] I hope and pray that we take those moments, those evenings, those periods of time to refresh, encourage, and strengthen our souls so that we can use them for the work that needs to be done down here in the valley.

You know the saying, we can be so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good? I think this could be true. When we fix our hope and our eyes to the east, to heaven, from where our Lord and Savior will return, our feet must be firmly planted on this earth and our thoughts, our prayers, and our works focused on the salvation of souls and the service of men and women here and the heat and the grind of the valley.

So today, as we celebrate this amazing feast, let us ask our Lord to reveal his presence to us. May we see his real, resurrected and ascended humanity in the breaking of the bread of the Holy Eucharist.

Let us also ask him that when we descend from the mountain and leave this place, that he will use us in the valley.

For that is where he needs us to be present for him. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

[7 : 51] Amen.