

## Homily For the Feast of the Transfiguration - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Tuesday, August 6, 2019

**2 Peter 1:16-19** "We ourselves heard (God's) voice while we were with him on the holy mountain."

**Psalm 97** "The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples behold his glory."

**Luke 9:28-36** "Since they stayed awake, they saw his glory."

### Beloved Son Transfigured

#### Introduction

If the Church's liturgical year is important to us, we certainly must pay very close attention to this wonderful and glorious feast day. It comes around twice every year. We celebrate it on the second Sunday of Lent because it builds courage and strength for the journey to the cross. It is the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God, the chosen and the beloved, who is about to die for faithfulness to the Father.

Today, on August 6, it is in the context of ordinary time. Today this feast shines the bright light of God's glory into the ordinariness of daily life. And, in so many ways, it brings us into contact with God's entire plan for the salvation of the world. In a manner different from most homilies, I want to go through Luke's account and pick out some of the key aspects of the Transfiguration which can inspire us to realize how God is acting in history.

#### On the Mountain

First, ***Jesus took with him Peter and John and James***: It is clear throughout the gospels that Jesus singled those three, especially Peter, for leadership of his Church. We weren't to be left with just the details memory of what happened. He put those humans and, by extension, their successors, in charge of proclaiming Jesus the beloved Son of God the Father. For example, in the second reading, Peter takes charge of the problem of correcting the errors of the day. We still have this problem and we still have Peter's successor, Pope Francis, charged with protecting the teachings of our faith.

**Next, they went up on the mountain to pray:** Communion with God was Jesus' purpose for that journey, just like it is for us at mass today. The mountain is up, towards God. This is the goal of all prayer, to bring us closer to God. Jesus does this constantly, and he reminds us to do the same.

**And while he was praying:** Luke subtly slips in that it is the prayer of Jesus which brings about or triggers the Transfiguration to follow. It's not the prayer of Peter and his companions. They were falling asleep at the time of Jesus being clothed in glory, which reminds us of the same three falling asleep just at a moment which was contrary to his glory, when Jesus was about to be entirely stripped even of his most basic human dignity.

**The appearance of his face changed:** Jesus' divine nature now transforms his human appearance. Moses and Elijah also appear in glory, but they only reflect God's glory. But Jesus takes on the appearance of his *own* divine nature.

**His clothes became dazzling white:** It sounds like an advertisement for Tide. "His clothes became dazzling white" even after all that walking around a dusty desert. But Jesus *is* that very light that Peter James and John saw shining from his face and clothes. When this happens after the resurrection, no one will recognize him. Mary Magdalene at the tomb, the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and the apostles fishing at the seashore, because they are not ready to experience that glory that Peter John and James saw take place right in front of them.

**They were speaking of his exodus:** At the first exodus from Egypt, the people were taken out of physical slavery, led by Moses. Elijah and Moses speak with Christ of his exodus at Jerusalem, his journey to the cross and the resurrection. The new and perfect Moses leads us out of slavery to sin, which condemns our eternal souls. This happens, in particular, in Baptism, where we die with Christ and are reborn with him.

**They were terrified as they entered the cloud:** The Old Testament cloud in the desert marked God's presence amongst the people. The people were too afraid to enter it. Only Moses did. But, now, God brought them right into the centre of his

presence, even in the midst of their terror. Following Jesus in prayer now becomes our path to the very centre of God's presence.

***This is my Son, my Chosen:*** At Jesus' trial, Pilate, condemned him to death, saying, Behold the man. On the mountain, God the Father declared: "Behold my Son, the chosen one."

## **I Was There**

These are just a few of the many rich aspects of our faith which can be seen if we prayerfully consider the Transfiguration. In his letter, Peter reminds us that the world usually does not understand these things. In responding to some who were teaching lies, he says: "We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are eyewitnesses of his majesty. We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain."

Peter himself heard the Father say, "Listen to him." Today, does this not give us great confidence? It is Peter, the one who was there, who confirms Luke's account. I was there and this is what I saw and heard and I am telling it to you again. He then tells us what we need to do today in response to the Transfiguration. Because of the cleverly devised myths of our day, the lies about Jesus and about Christianity, we can see the many ways that the world is asleep to the glory of God.

The Transfiguration shines into our hearts with the glorious light of Christ, the God who brings past and present and future all together in his great plan of salvation. Peter, the rock, the first head of Christ's Church, the first to hold Christ's own authority, says, "You will do well to be attentive to this as a to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

## **Call To Action**

Today is the day when we witness the glory of God. There is nothing we can say to add to it. It is a day to sit or stand or kneel or lie prostrate in front of its absolute

majesty. There is no dwelling place we can build for God because he transcends all places. Where he wants to dwell is in our hearts. That is where we must build a tent for him to dwell. Neither can we hold him in this present moment because he is the Lord of every moment.

Today's head of the Church, Pope Francis, tells us: "Let us stay awake. With Peter, James and John, let us go up today on the Mount of Transfiguration and kneel in contemplation of the face of Jesus, to absorb his message, and translate it into our lives, so that we too can be transformed by Love and into Love itself."