

Fr. Tim Ralston – Homily for March 20, 2011

In today's Gospel, we have the story of the Transfiguration. Jesus takes three of His closest Apostles up the mountain with Him, and allows them to see a glimpse of His great glory. Peter, James and John are the invited guests who are allowed to experience the Transfiguration of Christ. They see His face shine like the sun and His clothes become white as light. And if that's not enough, they also see two of the greatest figures in the history of God's people, Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Why Moses and Elijah? Well, these two figures are chosen by God to be there in order to represent the Law and the Prophets. Their presence reveals to the Apostles that everything that had happened in salvation history up to that point was leading up to the person of Jesus. All of the commandments, all of the Scriptures, all of the miracles and wonders, were all meant to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah, for the coming of Jesus.

And now, at the moment of the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah return to once again encounter the Lord on a mountain. I say one again because we know this is not the first time that these two figures met the Lord, and talked with Him, on a mountain.

In the case of Moses, he had gone up to the top of Mt. Sinai and there had received the 10 Commandments from God. He had talked with God, and because of this encounter, when Moses returned to the people, his face shone, much like that of Jesus in today's Gospel.

And as for Elijah, he also went up Mt. Sinai. While there, he received a vision from God. And he heard the Lord speak to him, not in the great wind, earthquake or fire that occurred, but in "a still, small voice."

So, then, how do all of these encounters with God on a mountain, affect us? What can we learn from them? Well, a lot. If we look at the experiences of Peter, James and John, and Moses and Elijah, we can make applications in our own lives.

For this is our mountain top experience – today, right now, as we gather for this celebration of the Holy Mass. We are invited here every Sunday by the Lord Himself, to come and catch a glimpse of His great glory. After all, this Mass is a foretaste of the Heavenly banquet that awaits us.

And while we may not see the face of Christ shine like the sun or any clothes become white as light, we do encounter our Lord in a very unique, and a very intimate way. Like Moses, we receive God's revelation to His people, we receive His commandments and His counsel as we listen to the Sacred Scriptures being proclaimed. And like Elijah, if we're really attentive, and can really listen, we can hear God whispering in a "still, small voice" words that will echo down to the very depths of our soul.

But most of all, we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist. When we worthily receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord in the Eucharist, we are being given a privilege and a gift far greater than what Moses and Elijah had received. We are being given something even more important than what Peter, James and John experienced at the Transfiguration. We are being united to the very person of Christ, we are being united to God Himself. Jesus hides His glory under the appearance of bread and wine, but His glory is still there; and we are receiving this glory into our lives.

Unfortunately, though, we often don't allow ourselves to truly see our celebration of the Mass as a great, awe-inspiring encounter with the Lord. Rather, our experience becomes routine. This shouldn't be though. Every Mass is a new encounter with the Lord; every Mass is a new opportunity to catch a glimpse of His glory and of what awaits us in God's Heavenly Kingdom. Hopefully, during this Lenten season, we will prayerfully approach the Mass and allow ourselves to be opened to this encounter. And then we will be able to say with St. Peter, "Lord, it is good that we are here." And we will joyfully return to this mountain top week after week, to encounter our Lord once again.