

## SPIRITUALITY

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 17:5

From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard:

This is my beloved Son, hear him.

**Gospel** Luke 9:28b-36; L27C

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray.

While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.

And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

But he did not know what he was saying.

While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud.

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

### Reflecting on the Gospel

For the Second Sunday of Lent the church gives us the reading of the transfiguration of Jesus, a story found in the Synoptics but not in the Gospel of John. Luke tells the story in a way similar to that of Mark, from whom he received it. Any differences are slight.

The presence of Elijah and Moses indicates Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophets (Elijah)

and the law (Moses). Only the three disciples are there to witness this terrific encounter, and they, too, are enveloped in the cloud, which itself is another image from the Old Testament. In particular, during the wandering in the wilderness, the Lord preceded the Hebrew people by means of a column of cloud during the day, and a column of fire at night (Exod 13:21; cf. Num 9:16-23). There, too, the cloud covered the meeting tent, and in doing so

the glory of the Lord filled the place (Exod 40:34-38). Even in the time of Solomon we hear about the presence of the Lord in a cloud filling the house of the Lord (1 Kings 8:9-10). Suffice it to say

there are many instances in the Old Testament where the presence of the Lord is indicated by a cloud, and that is the sense intended here by Luke as well. The cloud represents the Lord's glory; this is not a story about what happened one foggy day. Moreover, a voice from the cloud speaks, echoing the message heard at Jesus' baptism, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

More symbolism is present in the face of Jesus changing in appearance and his clothing becoming "dazzling white." There is so much that is symbolic and representative of Jesus' glory in this gospel reading that some scholars of Scripture refer to it as a "displaced resurrection account." In other words, this was originally a story of a resurrection appearance or a story about the risen Jesus that was transposed into the narrative of his earthly ministry by Mark (Matthew and Luke simply followed suit). Whether it is a displaced resurrection story or not, its Christology is profound, demonstrating that Jesus shares the glory of the Lord and fulfills the prophets and the law. He is on par with Elijah and Moses: He is called God's son, to whom we should listen.

### Living the Paschal Mystery

As the term itself implies, peak experiences do not come often and they do not last. But they can become a touchstone, a marker to which we may return mentally and spiritually at various points in our lives. The birth of a child, falling in love, a special day, or an encounter in nature may all be peak experiences we want to preserve, remember, and cherish. Perhaps like Peter we want to "build a tent," or otherwise make a memorial to the event and the person(s) with whom we shared it. But like the events in today's gospel, as soon as the incident happens, it seems to end. "After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone." The encounter was over and those who had witnessed it were humbled into silence. The encoun-



ter of the transfiguration informs our own peak experiences. They are a taste of the life that is to come, an eternal peak experience that satisfies all longings.

**Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** This is my chosen Son; listen to him.

**To the point:** For the second time in the Gospel of Luke the voice of God claims Jesus as God’s son. The first moment was at his baptism when “the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form” (Luke 3:22; NABRE). At that time the voice of God proclaimed, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (NABRE). At the Jordan River the voice from heaven speaks directly to Jesus, but on the mountain where Jesus goes to pray with his closest companions the voice addresses those around Jesus—Peter, James, and John—telling them, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” These words are addressed to us when we encounter our Lord in the Word and the Eucharist, “Behold, here is Jesus the chosen one, listen to him.”

**Connecting the Gospel**

**to the second reading:** In St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians we hear the promise of what is to come, “He will change our lowly body / to conform with his glorified body / by the power that enables him also / to bring all things into subjection to himself.” On the mountain Peter, James, and John see Jesus’ “glory” when “his face changed in appearance / and his clothing became dazzling white.” We might wonder how this experience of encountering Jesus as he truly is, transfigured in glory, affected them in the life of faith.

**to experience:** As Christians our ultimate goal is to be Christ-like, to reflect the dazzling glory of Christ in all of our interactions and so to bring honor to God. In our pursuit of this goal the more clearly we see Jesus, the more clearly we see the way to our own transformation in Christ.

**Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** In Psalm 27 the psalmist yearns for God: “Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.” In the gospel, Peter, James, and John encounter God in a whole-body way. They see the face of Jesus transfigured before them, and then, entering into a cloud, they hear the voice of God. The cloud is reminiscent of Moses’ meeting with God on Mount Sinai when he received the tablets of the law. As happened with Moses, God’s presence envelops Peter, James, and John. Naturally we hear that the disciples “became frightened when they entered the cloud.” Yearning for God’s presence cannot prepare us for the unfathomable reality of experiencing the living God. And yet we continue to seek God knowing, as St. Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

**to psalmist preparation:** Today’s psalm is one of trust and of desire. We know God and yet we yearn to know God more fully. We live in God’s kingdom, and yet we long for the complete fulfillment of that kingdom. How do you experience the deep desire to see God’s face in your own life?

**PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

Today’s psalm encourages us to “[w]ait for the LORD.” Where is God asking you to wait and be patient at this time in your life?

What does it mean to you that your “citizenship is in heaven”?

The voice from the cloud tells Peter, James, and John, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” How do you listen to Jesus in daily life?

In your life, which places of darkness are longing for the light of Christ? How might you lift these places up to the Light?