

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 17:5c

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;
listen to him.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 17:1-9; L614A

Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother, John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here.

If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said,

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid.

But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid."

And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain,

Jesus charged them,

"Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Reflecting on the Gospel

Sunglasses have become so much a fashion accessory—some people consider them really cool—that we sometimes forget their real purpose. Sunglasses offer us many more important benefits than making a fashion statement. They make us more comfortable in very bright light, filter out harmful ultraviolet rays, protect the eyeballs and tender skin around the eyes from sunburn and the serious consequences that can come from that. It would seem that the transfiguration would have been a sunglasses moment for Peter, James, and John! They needed to be shielded not only from the brightness that surrounded Jesus in the transfiguration, but also from the full revelation of their own participation in Jesus' glory and what that participation would cost them: their very lives.

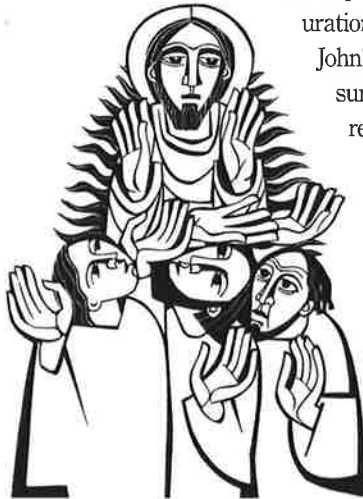
Surely a sunglasses moment: before the three apostles' very eyes Jesus' "face shone like the sun" and "his clothes became white as light." These images convey more than ordinary brightness, however, from which we naturally want to shield our eyes. Jesus "was transfigured before them." Something entirely new was happening. He was entirely changed. The apostles were given a glimpse of what was to come—not simply his death, but the risen Life that the Father would give him. Something entirely new was happening to Jesus, and it would happen to them.

While Jesus is transfigured, "Moses and Elijah appeared to them, / conversing with him." Peter, James, and John were given a glimpse of the "old." Moses and Elijah represent the law and prophecy of the old covenant. But with Jesus' transfiguration, we see the promise of change, of something entirely new taking place. When the voice from the cloud tells the three apostles to "listen to" Jesus, they will hear something new, they will be challenged to embrace something new, they will be called to participate in a mystery only now being revealed in its fullness. They could not be prepared, however, for the "new" Jesus was inaugurating: that human flesh can shine with the glory of God; that death is not the end, rising "from the dead" is.

Peter wants to pitch tents and stay in the brightness and promise. But this cannot be. They must come "down from the mountain" and travel with Jesus to Jerusalem, through their denials and doubts, through their dying to their old lives and selves, through the "old" into the "new." Only then can they grasp the extent to which God desires to possess us, to draw us into divine Life, to nurture us into the new covenant, the new relationship, God wishes to have with us through the divine Son. Jesus' new covenant promises us a share in his risen Life. In the transfiguration of Jesus, Peter, James, and John see their own glorification. And so do we.

Living the Paschal Mystery

In face of Jesus' transfiguration, the disciples "were very much afraid." Perhaps they were afraid of losing what was familiar to them from of old. Perhaps they were afraid because they had an inkling that this new journey presents formidable challenges. If we are to enter into Jesus' glorification, then we must be open to a transfiguration of ourselves, of our lives, of our own destiny. We must let go of our own limited vision and horizons and "listen to" Jesus opening up for us the uncharted territory of remarkable compassion and mercy, forgiveness and care, love and humility. We must allow Jesus to transfigure us.



Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: transfigured before them, face shone like the sun, Moses and Elijah appeared, listen to him, raised from the dead

To the point: Moses and Elijah represent the law and prophecy of the old covenant. When the voice from the cloud tells Peter, James, and John to “listen to” Jesus, they will hear something new. They were not prepared, however, for the “new” Jesus was inaugurating: that human flesh can shine with the glory of God; that death is not the end, rising “from the dead” is. Jesus’ new covenant promises us a share in his risen Life. In the transfiguration of Jesus, Peter, James, and John see their own glorification. And so do we.

Connecting the Gospel

to the second reading: Peter admonishes us to “be attentive to” his “prophetic message” as to a “lamp shining in a dark place.” We are to be attentive until Jesus, “the morning star,” rises in our hearts, giving us a share in his transfiguration, his resurrection, his glory.

to experience: High points in life, magic moments, visionary instances jump-start our plodding through the ordinariness of daily living. The transfigured glory within those of us who are faithful followers of Jesus is not simply an occasional “jump start” for our spiritual life, however, but the defining Power carrying us forward to eternal Life.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Pagan nations surrounding Israel typically boasted their gods demonstrated sovereignty by mighty deeds such as storms, earthquakes, and bloody battles. In Psalm 97 the Israelites boasted that their God was the “Most High over all the earth.” Their God rendered ultimate justice and judgment, melted mountains into pools of wax, and shined with a glory all peoples could see.

The transfiguration reveals Jesus shining with the glory of God (gospel). He is God’s beloved Son. We are to profess allegiance to him by listening to all that he teaches us. What he teaches are not “cleverly devised myths” but “the prophetic message that is altogether reliable” (second reading): he will enter into the fullness of his glory by being “raised from the dead” (gospel). We, too, are God’s beloved daughters and sons who shine with God’s glory. We, too, will be raised from the dead. Our singing of Psalm 97 is no idle boast, then, but our profession of steadfast faith as we wait until the day Christ, the “morning star,” rises in our hearts (second reading).

to psalmist preparation: In this responsorial psalm you sing about the glory of Jesus, Most High over all the earth because he is God’s beloved Son. You stand on the mountaintop of the transfiguration and see the victory of Jesus’ resurrection in every corner of the world. You stand with the community of faithful disciples who await the fulfillment of the promise of our own resurrection and glorification (see second reading). Do you believe? Do you see? Do you listen to Jesus (gospel)?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- The transfiguration says this about Jesus . . . says this about me . . .
- When I truly listen to Jesus, I hear . . . I respond with . . .
- I get glimpses of my own glorification when . . .

PRESIDERS

My ministry helps the people understand that risen Life comes from dying to self when I . . .

DEACONS

My serving others gives them a glimpse of Jesus and their transfiguration when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My manner of greeting opens people truly to listen to Jesus during the liturgy when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

When I truly give myself over to Jesus through my music ministry, the “new” that people hear is . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My selfless service helps me shine “like the sun” in my daily living and so . . .

LECTORS

The kind of preparation I must pursue to help the assembly be attentive and listen to the prophetic message in the reading is . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

What helps me see in the face of each communicant the face of the transfigured Jesus is . . .