

Today's Gospel begins with Peter, James, and John being led up a steep mountain by Jesus. This brought back memories of a time when some friends and I also hiked an extremely steep mountain pass. It was so painful that it led to some... frustration... being shared among ourselves. Suddenly, we topped the pass to find a beautiful crucifix overlooking our trail. I recall being immediately silenced by that crucifix and its reminder of our calling to share in Our Lord's sacrifice. So we continued to trek on but it was only when we saw the glow of our refuge in the distance that our steps began to feel lighter.

Reflecting on this, I can't help but wonder if the apostles were also tired and frustrated as they struggled to the top of Mount Tabor. They too were greeted by a glow after arriving, however, the glow of Jesus was transfigured before them, shining like the sun with His clothes white as light. He then told them to keep this vision to themselves until the Son of Man had been raised from the dead.

There are many depths to today's mystery, but I kept finding myself drawn to two simple questions. Firstly, why did Jesus reveal Himself to His apostles in this way before His coming passion? Secondly, why does the Church ask us to reflect on this mystery of the Transfiguration on the second Sunday of Lent? I kept going around and around in circles as I prayed on these questions until I a simple phrase echoed in my heart: a "glimpse of glory."

Jesus asked His apostles to give up everything to follow after Him, and He warned them that this would require great sacrifice on their part. At the same time, He knew better than anyone the struggles that they would soon face. He knew that they would face trials which would break the strongest of men. And so He tried to strengthen them with a brief glimpse of glory to take away the scandal of the cross, a beacon to guide them through the dark night to come.

As we begin this second week of Lent, the Church also wants to give us a brief glimpse of glory to lighten our steps as we continue our Lenten journey. I am sure that I have probably mentioned to all of you before that Lent is always a difficult time for me. Without fail, during Lent I always find myself pushed to what seems to be my breaking point. This Lent is no different, and although we are only a week and a half in, I already find myself wanting to slack on my Lenten promises. This brief glimpse of glory of our transfigured Lord reminds me of the reason for my Lenten practices, giving me the desire to keep pushing forward until I can encounter our Resurrected Lord face to face this Easter.

Within this context, it is interesting to reflect on the fact that Moses and Elijah appeared in the presence of Jesus when He was transfigured before the apostles. If you remember, last week I mentioned that the Old Testament recounts how both Moses and Elijah encountered the presence of God after forty days and nights of fasting. What I didn't mention, is that in both of these scriptural accounts, neither Moses nor Elijah were allowed to see the face of God. They could hear Him and see manifestations of His power, but His face remained veiled to them. Now, however, with the coming of Jesus Christ, God has a face that is unveiled for the world to see, and Moses and Elijah are finally able to see that which they longed for so ardently.

As we journey throughout the forty days of Lent, we perform works of prayer and fasting and almsgiving so that we too might see the face of God. Obviously, we know that we will never fully see the face of God on this side of Heaven and, like Moses and Elijah, must wait until our earthly death to see God's face full unveiled. And yet, at the same time, we know that Christ also wants to invite us up the mountain with His apostles so that we too might receive a brief glimpse of glory, a beacon that will guide us through the sufferings and sacrifices of this life.

While the penances and sacrifices that we endure for Christ purify our hearts to receive Him, it is only eyes of faith that allow us to see Him. In this sense, it is the Lenten practice of prayer that allows us to see Christ transfigured before us. It is only through prayer that God can give us glimpses of glory that will take away the scandal of the cross. This means that we must learn to be a people of prayer this Lent. If we have never prayed regularly before, then we must start small and make God a small sacrifice of five minutes a day. If we are already giving God five minutes a day in prayer, then we must begin to give Him ten minutes a day. We must start where we are, giving God a little more time in prayer than we normally do until we develop a true habit of prayer, engaging God face to face daily.

It is only then, as we regularly share our day with God in prayer, that we will begin to receive these brief glimpses of glory. God will be able to reveal how He was present in the chance encounters of our day. We will begin to see Him in the small providential moments when things fall into place perfectly... in the smiles of strangers and the faces of those we serve. These small glimpses help us to remember that God is still present with us in the midst of our suffering, lightening our steps so that we can continue moving forward in our journey of faith.

As my friends and I were walking closer to that glowing refuge, we began to jokingly encourage each other with all of the amazing food and drinks that we would find waiting on us, knowing of course that there was no way that this refuge would have any of it. Imagine our surprise when we finally entered in and were greeted with everything that we had just been dreaming about and more. As we continue our Lenten journey of faith, these glimpses of glory will encourage us along the way with thoughts of the true glories to come. Imagine how great our surprise will be when we one day enter into Heaven and discover that everything that we had been dreaming about pales in comparison to the truth which is unveiled before us.