

Lent II
3/13/2022

GLORY AND PASSION HELD TOGETHER

Jesus appears with Moses and Elijah. The lawgiver and the greatest of the prophets. The Torah, the law, was God's word to the people and the prophets spoke God's word to the people. But Jesus, who is the fulfillment of the law and prophets, didn't just speak the word of God. Jesus is the word God speaks. Jesus is the incarnate, the enfleshed word of God. Jesus is in dialogue with Moses and Elijah about the Exodus, the Passover, he will make in Jerusalem, that is, his passion, death and resurrection. Jesus' glory is connected to his passion. It's been said, *Only when his glory and passion are held together, can we correctly realize who Jesus is.*

This all happens after Peter makes his marvelous confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ. Immediately after that, Jesus speaks of his own upcoming passion. Peter rebukes him for this and Jesus turns around and rebukes Peter even more strongly. Yes, Jesus is the Christ. He is the messiah but not the type of messiah that fits the idea Peter has. Jesus will be a suffering messiah, a suffering and dying messiah. Once they descend from the mountain, Jesus will again speak of his passion. *Only when his glory and his passion are held together, can we correctly realize who Jesus is.*

The Transfiguration has been called the end that comes in the middle. What will happen at the end, the glory of Christ, appears briefly in the middle, Jesus gives to these three privileged apostles what will happen at the end. Perhaps to strengthen their hearts.

So this gospel tells us about who Jesus is and what he is about but it does something else. It tells us who we are and what we are to be about. As members of the Body of Christ, as part of the Church of Christ, as disciples of Jesus, we are called to share in the light and glory of Christ as well. And the way we do that is the way Jesus did. The road to Jesus' glory was through his suffering and death. In baptism, we're grafted onto this dying and rising, his Paschal Mystery. We share, usually in very small ways, in his suffering and in his death.

There's a wonderful line from the sixth century rule of St. Benedict that has given me comfort in times of suffering and trial. It sums all this up saying: *We*

patiently share in the passion of Christ so that we might merit to be partakers of his kingdom.

Last week's gospel told us about Jesus' time in the desert and his temptations which reminds us of his humanity. Today we hear of his glory which reminds us that he is truly God.

In this life we will suffer, we will even suffer for following Christ. For many people, including many saints, following Christ has, in worldly terms, made things more difficult but it also leads to glory. We called to unite our sufferings, in the end, our all, with his sufferings of Christ.

Reflecting on this, Pope Francis has said, *The Transfiguration of Christ shows us the Christian perspective of suffering. Suffering is not sadomasochism: it is a necessary but transitory passage. The point of arrival to which we are called is luminous like the face of Christ Transfigured.*

St. Luke shares an important detail: this happens while Jesus is praying. It's a prayer event. Prayer can be a transforming and even transfiguring event, seldom as dramatically as is related to us in the gospel, but prayer can be a type of transfiguration for two reasons:

- 1—In prayer we seek not just to talk to God but to listen to God. That's something we hear towards the end of this gospel passage. If you're looking for a message from heaven, here it is: Listen to him. Prayer involves listening to God as we hear his word, as we ponder and meditate on his actions and even as we pay attention to those we recite in vocal prayer such as, *thy will be done* or *now and at the hour of our death*.
- 2—Prayer changes things although so often, it may be over time. Through prayer, perhaps over a period of time, we start to see things differently. We can start to see things in a different light and we can act in a different light. In God's light.

Here in the Eucharist we enter into the hour of Jesus' death and resurrection, his Paschal Mystery, his Passover from life through death and into new life. Here we strive to grow more deeply in lives of intentional faith. The road to glory passes through Mount Calvary. To get to that glory, you can't go around Calvary, beneath it or above

it. The only way is to go through it. *Only when his glory and passion are held together, can we correctly realize who Jesus is.*

Throughout our lives but particularly through Lent and Holy Week, nourished by the Eucharist, informed by the word of God and strengthened by prayer, *We patiently share in the passion of Christ so that we might merit to be partakers of his kingdom.*