

QUESTIONS
Second Sunday of Lent, February 28, 2021
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Most young children go through what I call a “questions phase.” You’re probably familiar with these seemingly endless string of questions. “Why is the sky blue?” “How do birds fly?” “Do dogs see color?” “Is the ocean bigger than the land?” “How do fish breathe?” These curiosity questions about nature and life are natural. That being said, I don’t know about you, but as a dad I could only play “20 Questions” for so long before I responded with a “Go ask your mother.”

When I read today’s Gospel, I feel like one of those little kids filled with so many questions. “What does the six days have to do with anything?” “Why did Jesus only take three disciples with him, and why single out Peter, James and John?” “What’s a fuller?” “Why did Peter want to build tents?” “How did the apostles know they were seeing Moses and Elijah? Did they announce themselves?” “Why did Jesus swear the three to secrecy?” “Does the Transfiguration have meaning in our modern world?” Questions, questions, questions!

St. Mark begins his scripture with the reference to “six days.” It is one of the most specific timeframes in the Bible... it has been just six days since Jesus first announced the prophecy of his passion which the disciples found troubling. Today’s event will leave a searing memory in the minds of Peter, James and John. Jesus knows that these three will have prominent roles in the early Church as documented in the Acts of the Apostles. They will need to be strengthened in their faith to lead others on the arduous road that lies ahead.

This quartet trudges up a high mountain... a tall peak that can remind of us of a similar mountain which Moses climbed, spending six days with God to receive the Ten Commandments. As we read throughout the New Testament, a mountain is a setting for revelations and key events during Jesus’ ministry.

At this point, Jesus is transfigured but what does that mean? Transfiguration is a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful, spiritual state. The three see Jesus’ humanity radiating the majesty, the glory of the Son of God which will be permanently

revealed in the Second Coming. Even his clothes become “dazzling white” so much so that St. Mark says no “fuller” or launderer on earth could achieve such brightness. Truly, this unmatched, white clothing signifies holiness and a purity that can only come from God.

If the Transfiguration of Jesus wasn't enough, the Messiah now appears with Moses, the great lawgiver and Elijah, the wonder-working prophet. Together they signify the totality, the fulfillment of Old Testament – the Law and the Prophets bearing witness to Jesus. We don't know how Peter, James and John knew they were seeing Moses and Elijah since both lived hundreds of year before. Scripture experts believe that as the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus as the Son of God, it also revealed the Law Giver and the Great Prophet to the three disciples.

In his excitement, St. Peter suggests building three tents... he understandably wants to grasp this extraordinary moment... to hold on to what he is witnessing. Peter's enthusiasm is misplaced... he doesn't yet fully comprehend that Jesus' glory comes through the cross and cannot be contained within a tent... he doesn't realize the full dignity of

the one, who he, himself identified as the Messiah but now puts on the same level as Moses and Elijah. Part of his confusion, I'm sure, comes from being terrified as what he and the others are seeing. Can you imagine?! I believe I would be just as terrified to see the biblical greats of Moses and Elijah appear side-by-side with the long-awaited Son of God!

But there is more... as it was during the great Exodus, a cloud overshadows the trio and, for the second time, the heavenly Father gives audible testimony to his beloved Son just as he did at Jesus' baptism in the Jordan adding the command to "listen to him." Talk about being terrified!

Peter, James and John have been shown a sliver of the road ahead... if they listen carefully and obey his commands all the way to the cross, their destiny will be joined to Jesus... they too will be one day be transfigured with divine glory.

Some may say the account of the Transfiguration is a nice Bible story but it really doesn't apply to modern Catholics. Nothing could be

further from the truth. The transfiguration of Jesus invites us to see that there is an arduous journey of our own sometimes up a steep mountain when the path is not always straight and even. We should understand that sometimes in life we will be terrified yet we should take comfort in knowing that Jesus is always with us. We should hear the command to “listen to him” to reach a greater understanding of God’s love and of our responsibilities as Christians. We should feel the very presence of Jesus as we approach the Holy Eucharist. And we should believe that we are being re-created and transfigured in Him as we cooperate with the grace given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Today, we share the Second Sunday of Lent... our journey of preparation. Only four weeks remain. This is the time to study. This is the time to pray and reflect. This is the time to seek Jesus and to listen to God... to feel the Holy Spirit aligning our souls to the Messiah. This is the time to ask questions and seek answers from our Heavenly Father.