

Word of God – Word of Life

“This is my Son, my Chosen; *listen to him!*”
Luke 9:28-36

Since the core passage for February presents a pivotal event in the ministry of Jesus it might be well to set the Transfiguration in its context. Eight days earlier, Jesus, having asked the disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” hears Peter’s testimony, “You are the Messiah of God.” Jesus orders the disciples not to tell anyone and goes on to predict his sufferings and death. Not only that, but Jesus goes on to say that their lives will also be shaped by the cross. Then, shortly after the awesome experience on the mountaintop, Jesus again foretells his death (9:44) and sets his face toward Jerusalem (9:51).

The following reflections and questions are intended to help you listen prayerfully and fruitfully to this passage. Remember though that the goal is not so much gathering information or even insight but to “hear” God speaking to you personally and to all of us together.

- There are three other accounts of Jesus’ Transfiguration. The differences are not many, but a few are significant, and we can look at those in the Adult Forum. (*Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-17, and 2 Peter 1:16-18*)
- “...about eight days after...” (v.28) In the early church the eighth day came to signify the day of resurrection and the beginning of the new creation.
- Why did Jesus often choose the same three apostles to accompany him? (v.28) Perhaps because Peter, James, and John were potentially the most influential for both good and bad. Certainly, James and John were capable of being exclusive (vv.49-50), harsh (v.54) and competitive (see *Mark 10:35-45*).
- The sleepiness of the three apostles reoccurs at Jesus’ anguished prayer on the Mount of Olives. (v.32) How might weariness or inattention diminish our own encounters with God?
- Moses and Elijah represent “the Law and the Prophets” which was a way of referring to the entire Hebrew Scriptures. (v.30) They and Jesus share numerous commonalities. All three encountered God’s glory in high and lonely places. Moses like Jesus shone with divine light, and they all experienced intense conflict with rulers and authorities.

- “They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” (v.31) Luke alone mentions what the three were discussing. Interestingly Luke uses the word for *exodus* where the translation reads departure.
- An overshadowing cloud often signified the presence of the LORD of glory. (v.34) The voice from the cloud recalls Jesus’ baptism. (v.35) Awe, even terror (v.34), is a natural response to any encounter with the Divine Majesty.
- *This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him.* (v.35) What are some ways you are listening to Jesus? Are there other means of being alert to the presence and leading of Jesus that you might try?
- Not only does the Transfiguration serve as a key transition in the Gospel but it serves in our liturgical year to close the season of Epiphany and lead us into Lent. (vv.29-31) From the glorious heights of the mountain we can see and perhaps better understand Calvary, the desolate hill outside Jerusalem and beyond, that glow of the empty tomb.

Some suggestions to deepen your encounter with this passage:

- Allow yourself to imagine various aspects of this event: What was the hike up the mountain like? How long were they in prayer? Why did Peter suggest building three tents? What was the experience like for Jesus? For Moses and Elijah? What was the appearance of the cloud and the sound of God’s voice? What was the terror/awe that the apostles felt? How did they feel when it was over and they saw only Jesus?
- Write down your questions and reflections.
- Google “Transfiguration images” and choose a few that seem to catch your sense of the event or that impact how you imagine it.
- Share your impressions and response with others.
- Pray, asking God to direct and guide you as you prayerfully encounter the Transfiguration.

