

Transfiguration / IX Trinity 2023  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
2 Peter 1.13-18 St. Luke 9.28-36



Mountains are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible. They are places people went to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and get closer to God. They still do...monasteries and convents are often located in mountains...where it is possible to quietly contemplate God's awesome gift of nature.

In Greek mythology, Mount Olympus is the place where the gods lived. At 29,000 feet...that's over five miles...Mount Everest in the Himalayas...is the highest mountain on Earth. If you want to climb the highest mountain known to mankind...you will have to leave Earth and travel to Mars. There you will find another Mount Olympus...and it's almost 14 miles high!

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. According to the Book of Exodus...God told Moses not to look at him and covered Moses' eyes. When Moses came back down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments his face was also shining...so brightly the people couldn't look at him either.

The Transfiguration of Jesus on a mountain is the moment in history where human beings meet God...the place where earth meets heaven. Jesus is the bridge between earth and heaven; he is the ladder of Jacob's dream in Genesis connecting heaven and earth.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a critical turning point in the life of Jesus. It is unique among all of the miracles of Jesus because it happens to him. It was primarily for his benefit. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus...about his impending death as the way it must be to make everything they stood for...the Law and all the prophetic writings about the Messiah who would put things right for us with God come true.

Luke tells us Jesus' whole appearance changed. It was transfigured...transformed. His face was bright like the sun and his clothes "dazzling white". Peter, James and John, our Lord's closest friends, were with him. They must have had a busy day...the first thing they did was take a nap.

But Peter and his friends woke up in time to see Jesus in all of his glory...and they recognized Moses and Elijah standing with him. They wanted to hold on to the moment. Peter wants to set up camp for Jesus and Moses and Elijah. But this was a moment to be held on to. It was a moment cherished, remembered, and later told to the whole world.

When Moses and Elijah left, a white cloud, a symbol of God's presence appeared. God spoke the same words he said when Jesus was baptized by his cousin John, "This is my own dear Son, listen to him". The baptism of Jesus was the beginning of his public ministry. The Transfiguration of Jesus was the beginning of the end of his public ministry. Now he would go to Jerusalem and do exactly what Moses and Elijah told him he must do to complete his mission.

We believe in the Transfiguration of Jesus not only because our faith in him compels us to believe, but also because of the eyewitness account of Peter and his friends. Peter tells us in the Epistle he wants us to remember everything he has said while he was still alive. Peter evidently had some idea his own life on Earth was about to end. He goes on to say we don't believe in made-up stories. Everything he has told us is true. He and his friends were on the mountain when they saw God give Jesus honor and glory.

In the Transfiguration of Jesus we get a glimpse of our own transfigurations in "raiment white and glistening". In the Collect we ask God to...

*..."Mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in his beauty"*

Mountains. They are great places to go to escape from our hectic lives. They are indeed places we can go to get spiritually refreshed and reconnected with the God who loves us and has revealed his light and glory to us through Jesus.

God told Moses not to look at him. The Transfiguration of Jesus means we have seen God's light and glory in Jesus...and we never have to look away.

