

Transfiguration

2nd Sunday of Lent
Luke 9: 28-36

Submitted by Dr. Rosemary Murphy

Several years ago, a friend shared pictures of a camping trip in the mountains. He described a kind of cosmic trance and being overcome with the natural beauty of the area. He said it was a mystical experience during which he strongly felt the presence of a creator greater than himself.

Throughout the scriptures, it is in high places where the Divine and the human connect. Therefore, it is important to notice where today's Gospel, the Transfiguration, is located. The narrative opens with this detail: "Jesus took Peter, James and John and went up the mountain to pray." (Luke 9:28) Jesus' most intimate disciples, on their way to Jerusalem with him, were selected to share a prayer experience with Jesus--and receive the gift of a mystical occurrence.

Readers, familiar with the Hebrew scriptures, will recognize the significance presence of Moses, who received God's covenant on Mt Sinai and of Elijah, the prophet, who encountered God in a still, small voice on Mt. Carmel. Jesus, God's new Law of love and chosen Prophet, is central to the narrative. His presence conveys the glory awaiting those who enter into the suffering, death, and resurrection of God's only Son. Christians are to listen to him.

However, the specially-chosen disciples fall asleep. Jesus took them with him for the support of their prayer and to continue their preparation for his mission. The three darkest days in human history would take a toll on the disciples and those who were becoming followers. They would need strong faith.

The disciples awoke just as the apparition was fading. Peter's thought was to construct three tents and hold onto the glory. However, God's glory cannot be "saved" in a tent. At the end of the scene, the Almighty steps in and speaks directly to them: "This is my son, the chosen one, listen to him." (Luke 9:35) The disciples, not yet empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to all that they saw and knew of Jesus, were silent. Only after Pentecost, could they recall this experience and speak of Jesus' love and glorified presence.

This Lent, as we prepare for the glory promised us at the end of our own journey to Jerusalem, let us find quiet places where, for a moment, we can pray with Jesus. Let us listen to him and prayerfully support those in whom he is suffering today.