

Sunday, February 21, 2016

Attentive to the Grandeur of God

2nd Sunday of Lent

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/021416.cfm>

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

Philippians 3:17—4:1 or 3:20—4:1

Luke 9:28B-36

Oh, to be Peter, James, and John! In the company of others, they walked with Jesus, heard him teach, saw him heal and perform miracles, had dinner with him. Who wouldn't want to have such everyday moments with the Lord? Then, in Sunday's Gospel, we hear how they went up the mountain with Jesus, saw him transfigured before their eyes, and heard the voice of the Father. What it must have been like! No wonder Peter asked to build tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Who wouldn't want to simply stay and soak it in?



Have you ever wished that God would suddenly appear to you, alleviating doubt, giving you direction, providing courage to live selflessly as a person of faith? Most of the time, knowing that God is with us is enough. We spend a little time in prayer, maybe occasionally read a passage from the Bible, or offer some time in service, and all seems fine. Then, something happens. An illness is detected, a family member is in crisis, a job is uncertain or is ended, and we suddenly wish God would simply appear and tell us what to do. Or, an unsettled feeling takes hold and we just cannot figure out how to shake it. The news is filled with stories of tension, violence, and suffering; we wonder how to respond. It is easy enough to say that God is with us, we might think to ourselves, yet far harder to live with faith during such challenging times.

The truth is, even after Peter, James, and John saw Jesus transfigured in front of their very eyes and heard God's voice, they still struggled, were uncertain, and turned away. It is unlikely that we would respond differently. Manifestations of God's power and glory would quickly fade in our memories and we would be back to our routines, mundane and self-centered though they might be.

Perhaps we need to think about this in a different way. Like Peter, James, and John, we can walk with Jesus every day, especially in those moments when life is challenging and difficult. We may not physically hear the voice of the Father, but we do hear God's voice in the words of sacred Scripture, especially during the Liturgy of the Word. Not only do we dine with the Lord at Mass, we receive his body and blood! In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis encourages us to be open to an encounter, or a renewed encounter with the love of Christ, daily ([EG](#), 3).

Such encounters may not be as rare as we think. God is always with us. Christ offers us mercy, love, forgiveness; the Holy Spirit strengthens, guides, and gives us wisdom. All of these blessings are simply waiting to be accepted and lived out, much as the Father waited for the return of the prodigal son.

The difference in this way of thinking comes down to attentiveness. When we pay attention, we see God's magnificence with our own eyes and hear God's voice with our own ears. Through encounters with others and with all of creation, we are led to that encounter with God's love that changes us. We may be drawn to reflect on God's power and glory through scientific [discoveries](#), such as the detection of gravitational waves by scientists this past week, a phenomenon that had been predicted by Albert Einstein but only confirmed through recent technological breakthroughs. Or, we may be inspired by the actions of others, [like the Muslims who tweeted their plans to stand in solidarity with Christians this Lent](#). We may perceive God's presence with us during prayer, be struck by the mystery of Christ's love in the Eucharist, or be prompted to reach out to others in service through the witness of those who have done so in the past, or are doing so now—saints or saints-in-the-making. When we become attentive, life is transformed, transfigured. In the words of Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, "[the world is charged with the grandeur of God](#)."

Peter, James, and John encountered the transfigured Christ on the mountain. No doubt, that experience stayed with them long after Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. They glimpsed the grandeur of God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, responded through their actions, as witnesses and servants who stood firm in the Lord. How will we respond to the transforming grace of God in our lives? How will our attitudes and actions be transfigured by the love of Christ? How will we share Christ's mercy and compassion, as a reflection of that which has been shown to us? These are important things for us to consider this second week of Lent, and throughout our lives as Christian disciples.

Leisa Anslinger

NOTICES

NATIONAL CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES COLLECTION

Many dioceses will take up the annual Catholic Relief Services Collection on the weekend of March 6, 2016. Parish resources for this important Lenten offering are available on the USCCB website at:

<http://usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/catholic-relief-services-collection/collection/index.cfm>.

LENTEN RESOURCES FOR PARISHES AND INDIVIDUALS

The USCCB offers special resources for Lent on its website at:

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/index.cfm>.

From there you can download the Pope Francis' Lenten message in this Year of Mercy and the US Bishops' pastoral letter on the sacrament of penance, "God's Gift of Forgiveness," as well as other great resources.

In addition to its other resources for Lent, the USCCB is offering "40 Days of Mercy," an online calendar for the season of Lent with daily activities and meditations. You will want to share this information with parish members, school and religious education staffs, and other interested parties. The online calendar can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/lent-calendar.cfm>.

LENT AND CRS RICE BOWL

Catholic Relief Services is again offering its successful Lenten action program, CRS Rice Bowl, to parishes. The resources are available at www.CRSricebowl.org/. Bulletin resources for CRS Rice Bowl are also available on the LPi Art & Media Portal at www.Portal.4LPi.com; search keyword "[Rice Bowl](#)".

PRAYER

Gracious and merciful God,

in whose presence and love we dwell,

open our hearts and minds to your love in our midst.

Lead us to encounter you through the beauty of creation

and the loving, just, and peaceful actions of others.

Then, aware of your being with and among us,

transform and strengthen us to share your love

as your sons and daughters, disciples of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray through Christ, who is one with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

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