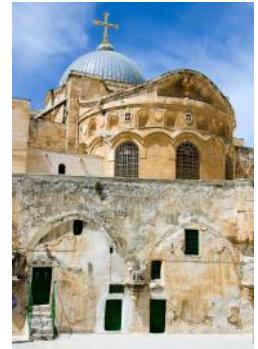


FROM OUR DEACON



On this second Sunday of Lent, we are provided a glimpse not of suffering and deprivation, but of the glory of God that is revealed in Jesus' Transfiguration on Mount Tabor.

In December, 1998, I had the great experience of travelling to the Holy Land as part of a congressional staff delegation. It was a whirlwind trip and our Israeli hosts packed as much into the trip as possible. I was blessed to visit so many of what are considered the most important sights in the Holy Land – the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Masada, the Dead Sea, the Golan Heights, and the Mount of Olives. You name it, we went there. It was quite an experience. At one point, we drove by Mount Tabor and our Israeli guide, who had a microphone and was narrating the journey from the front of the tour bus, casually mentioned that we were passing Mount Tabor, the "mountain" on which Christians believed Jesus was transfigured. Frankly, it was pretty unimpressive. I expected and wanted magnificence, but what I saw appeared very ordinary. I never would have guessed, just by looking at it, that this was a place which God Himself revealed His Glory to Peter, James, and John. The site of a miraculous occurrence appeared to my eyes as quite ordinary; Mount Tabor seemed like nothing more than a big hill.



But there was nothing ordinary about this place or the event that took place there. In the Transfiguration, Jesus was not transformed. He was not changed; He merely gave three of His chosen disciples a brief glimpse of who He really was. He revealed His glory and did so not only in the presence of His disciples, but in the presence of Moses and Elijah, who represent the two principal components of the Old Testament: the Law and the Prophets.

Why did Jesus do this? He did it to strengthen the disciples' faith, to prepare them for the challenges and suffering they would later endure by confirming to them that He was in fact the Messiah. He wanted them to remember this moment when later they would see Him disfigured and dying on the cross. But the Transfiguration was only a temporary event. It was not meant to be permanent. In the same way, at certain times in this life, God may give certain members of the faithful (*not* all of the faithful, all the time), special experiences of His grace that strengthens their faith.

We should welcome these experiences for the graces they are, but should not expect them to continue indefinitely. They may have been meant only as momentary glimpses of the joy of heaven to sustain us as we face the challenges of this life, to help strengthen us on the road that will--ultimately--bring us into the infinite and endless joy of Heaven, where nothing is ordinary.

~ Deacon Rob

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Known and Loved From Within

A miracle happens every time we open ourselves to the love of Jesus, every time we allow the light to enter and shine through us. Light exposes all that is impure in our hearts, and the impure becomes light. The one who discloses his or her darkness to Jesus will see it changed into light.



If Jesus only knew us from the outside—as a doctor knows the illnesses of patients—we would not, in spite of everything, be completely set free from our inner loneliness. But he knows us from the inside as well. He has been up against the reality we experience. Jesus knows from experience how tempting the way that is not God's way can be: "Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested" (Heb 2:18).

Even though Jesus has not sinned, he has carried the sin of all humankind, yet not on his shoulders as were it a strange and unfamiliar burden which really didn't impact him very deeply. No. He has carried this sin in his heart. Sin has entered and impacted him deeply. He has experienced—infinitely more than any of us who are sinners—how much sin hurts. Precisely because it was his nature to be one with the Father, the abandonment from the Father was, for us, an incomprehensible abyss of misery.

Jesus knows from within. No one knows us as well as he does. He is the only one who can change our darkness to light.

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