## Transfiguring into Saints

This upcoming Wednesday, August 6th, we celebrate the feast of the Transfiguration, where Peter, James and John get a glimpse of heaven atop the mountain as Jesus is transfigured before them and converses with Moses and Elijah.

One of the details in the Gospel for the day is the voice coming from the cloud (Luke 9:35b): "***This is my chosen Son; listen to him."*** The identity of the Son as the Son of God is confirmed; the disciples won't understand it fully until after the resurrection.

However, this isn't the first time the disciples misunderstand who Jesus is. They've been trying to learn who He is all along. In the boat on the water, they ask "who is this, whom even the wind and seas obey?" And, earlier before going up the mountain, Peter couldn't accept the fact that Jesus would have to suffer and be rejected, for which Jesus rebukes Him. The transfiguration gives the three apostles a bit of a morale boost. But, it does not end the story, because there is work yet to be done.

With that in mind, what this Gospel challenges us to first transfigure ourselves. With the transfiguration, Peter, James and John see the future Jesus, but I also think they can see a bit of themselves as to what one will appear like when they are, body and soul, glorified in heaven. Jesus on the mountain gives them a sneak-preview of sorts as to what God wants for all of us as we pass through death. Just as the seed falls to the ground and produces fruit and as such does not lose it's original essence, but is rather transformed into something greater, we do that through how we live our lives. The challenge for us is to remember that this Jesus, even if we can't see Him in dazzling white just yet, stands by us - but He wants us to respond to the grace He gives us.

So how then can we really be transfigured as we try to become saints?

A few things come to mind.

One is prayer. When we pray every day and go up the mountain to be with Jesus, we find time to hear His voice and to get clarity in our lives as to what He may be calling us to do. We find forgiveness and love and peace. It's important to try to have a "mountaintop" experience daily, even if it's just a few minutes, so we can hear the voice of God.

Second, listening. Remember that key word: "listen" that the Father says with respect to the Son. We talk quite a bit, but how often do we miss things when we are doing this? Most of us know we can pick up on things from the voice inflection or the words behind the words of a loved one. So it is with God. When we make time for silence, we will find that these are moments when God speaks most loudly to us.

Third, we are humble. We make mistakes along the way as we try to climb the mountain. God knows this, and is always loving and forgiving. Hopefully we can forgive ourselves for being human, and openly acknowledge our sins before God by going to

confession, or owning up to our mistakes to others. Humility is a great teaching tool as well for it shows others we love that we are human and all in need of mercy.

Fourth, we work. Becoming a saint isn't easy. Nor is climbing a mountain. But every day we can do an examination of conscience so we look at the choices we've made and how we live our lives. We can look at the progress, but ask ourselves how we can be better at our vocations.

Fifth, we journey together. Mountain climbers are chained together to protect one another. Jesus journeys with Peter, James and John. Its important to seek people out who will help us climb the mountain by challenging us, spurring us on, and encouraging us.

Sixth, we persevere. Growing in holiness and being transfigured takes work and commitment. You don't go to the gym for a few days and all of a sudden turn into an Olympic athlete. And all athletes are constantly working and training no matter how many awards or medals they have won. It's hard to live out our vocation; but think of how much our parents do for us every day, from feeding us as infants, to helping us to read and write, to dealing with our teenager dramas, to helping us with homework and loving us even if we are at times hard to love. They persevered because they saw our potential; God does too, but we need to keep working if we are going to truly reach that potential which is a daily thing throughout our lives.

And lastly, we go down the mountain and get to work. Jesus will go right back to helping people as will the apostles. We all need time for prayer; and also time for rest, for vacations, for leisure. These are good things. But God wants us to help others become saints too which is what we do by being people of hope changing this world for the better.

Grace is indeed amazing as we sing in the song, but it's also not cheap and it requires a response. This is something not just for Lent, but a daily thing - so let us journey with our Lord and truly be transfigured into saints.

God's blessings to you,

Fr. Paul