

At this point in St. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 17, Jesus and his disciples have been through a lot together.

1st of all, Jesus has called each of them by name to come and follow after him.

Jesus has told them several times about the demands of being a disciple --- tough stuff – like even loving your enemies.

Jesus has tried to teach them how to pray, how to put others first, and how they must keep God at the center of their lives.

And the disciples have seen Jesus cure lots of people, calm a storm, and confront the scribes and Pharisees in their hypocrisy.

Jesus has even given the disciples a trial run to go out on their own --- to proclaim the kingdom of God – and they did all right, coming back to him with great success stories.

But even though Jesus and the disciples have been through a lot together already – it pales in comparison to what is to come. For after this transfiguration moment – it is one fast journey--- to Jerusalem and crucifixion.

If Jesus can stay focused on what he needs to do, and hopefully get the disciples to stay focused on what they need to do --- he and they will be able to get through inconveniences, set-backs, road blocks, pain and suffering --- on the road to eternity.

So in order to stay focused – Jesus chooses not to spend time alone, as he did in last week's story of the desert – but he chooses to take his three closest disciples – Peter, James, and John – up the mountain with him.

And there they encounter, actually converse with, the Gospel says – Moses and Elijah – meaning they spend time interacting with the law and the prophets – that is the Jewish Scriptures.

So Jesus knows what awaits him – suffering and death. He knows it isn't going to be easy. And so this time on the mountain is an intense period of preparing for the things to come – and hopefully a time to dispel the worries and fears of Peter, James and John – and further prepare them for what they will have to face.

We know this was time well spent for Jesus – for as the Eucharistic prayer will say today: “he did not disdain to be nailed for our sake to the wood of the cross.”

And it must have worked somewhat for Peter, James, and John – for right before going up the mountain, Jesus tells all the disciples what was coming down the pike – his suffering and death --- and all of them protested, especially Peter, who said: “God forbid, Lord! NO such thing shall ever happen to you.”

Shortly after this mountaintop experience – Jesus tells them a second time what is coming, and although this time they were “overwhelmed with grief” – there were no cries of protest, no out-right denials of the possibilities – so the disciples are at least beginning to wrap their minds and hearts around the future --- although all but John – will scatter and hide when the time of crucifixion comes.

So that brings me to my word for this week --- which is ----- SUPPORT.

Jesus went to the mountaintop with Peter, James and John, to soak up their support --- so that he would not disdain, that is reject, the wood of the cross.

SUPPORT –

The desert is a place of quiet – a place of for listening. But the mountain top is a place for support.

And here is the picture.

And this is what I leave you to reflect on –

Who do we soak up support from – especially when we have something difficult we are facing?

Do we spend any time with the law and the prophets – that is the scriptures, before we make a major decision in life?

Who walks with us on our journey of life?

Who do we hang out with – people who lift us up – or people who drag us down?

Who holds our hand, gives us comfort or encouragement – helps us choose the right path – steers us in the right direction?

We all need people in our lives to love us and support us – no matter what. . . [Oak Grove. . .]

Who are those people in our life – and during these days of lent – why don't we reach out to them and actually tell them how much we need them and appreciate them. . .