

So just as on the 1st Sunday of every Lent – we get a story of Jesus being driven into the desert –

On the 2nd Sunday of every Lent – we get a story of Jesus' Transfiguration – this year, in year B of the Lectionary cycle – as told to us by St. Mark.

And just as Jesus going into the desert comes at a particular time in Jesus' life: right before he begins his public ministry ---- so, too, does the Transfiguration come at a particular time in Jesus' life.

In each of the Synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke ---- right after Jesus finishes his ministry in and around the sea of Galilee – in the northern part of Israel ----

and right before he sets his sights on heading south – into Jerusalem – and his coming suffering and death – he takes Peter, James, and John – up the mountain.

Jesus' time – and our time in the desert – is a time of preparation – for his coming ministry ---and our ministry --- of being a blessing, a Beatitude, a source of God's grace to all we meet.

If you haven't figured it out by now – let me tell you about it -----it's easy to say in HERE that we are going to go out and be a blessing to all we meet--- ---- much harder to do when we get out there ----- just like it was easy for Peter, James, and John to say they would stick it out with Jesus to the end ----- and much harder for them to follow through on that --- when the going got rough --- and the cross and its nails were on the horizon.

So the time on the mountain, was a special period of preparation for the disciples --- it was meant to give them a glimpse of the glory that was to come – **to sustain them** through the dark days they would have to face. . . and yes, it was good for them to be there as Peter blurts out when he hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. . .

And so to this week’s quote. . .:

“We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain, and I’ve looked over and seen the promised land.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Just think how many times Peter, James, and John may have whispered those words to themselves or said them to one another – to sustain themselves:

I want to do God’s will.

There are difficult times.

But I’ve been up the mountain.

I’ve seen God’s glory.

I want to do God’s will.

But it sure is hard.

But I’ve seen God’s glory. . .

And as we know, the glimpse into the kingdom on top of the mountain WASN’T enough to sustain them. . . For when the going got rough, the weak got going – scattering to the four winds.

As we know, the disciples would need the **power** of the Holy Spirit, which came down upon them at

Pentecost – in order to be the people God was calling them to be. . .

HOW ABOUT US?

Is the glimpse into the kingdom of God when we go up the mountain going to be enough to sustain us??

But when do we get to go up the mountain??

Every week --- here at the liturgy. . . we get a glimpse of the heavenly kingdom. . .

The Vatican II document on the Liturgy, that I love so much, tells us that each and every time we gather for the Eucharist – we experience the presence of Christ in 4 different ways – not just one, but 4 different ways.

FIRST, Christ is present in the priest who is presiding. Take a good look. Here is your presence of Christ, right here in the flesh. And for some of you – maybe this is the hardest presence to experience. . .

SECOND, Christ is present in the Words of Scripture. Sunday after Sunday – in the Old Testament, in the Responsorial Psalm, in the New Testament, in the Gospel – Christ is present. But unless we have open ears and open hearts – this, too, may be a difficult presence to grasp and appreciate.

THIRD, Christ is present in his Body and Blood of the Eucharist. And we may not always understand with our heads how this is possible – but it is more important that we understand it with our hearts – and see in the Eucharist the nourishment and strength we need to get us through another week.

FOURTH, Christ is present in those who are gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. . . so did I say that perhaps seeing Christ in ME is the hardest presence to appreciate???? Maybe it is turning to your right and to your left and seeing the presence of Christ RIGHT THERE in the person next to you. . .

This is our glimpse into the kingdom of God. . . We have been to the mountain. And yes, we will have difficult days – but I bet not as difficult as Abraham had in our first reading today – being asked to sacrifice his own son – but he was willing to do it. . because of his love of God.

And if God is for us – who can be against us, as St. Paul reminds us.

So is our trip up this mountain--- going to keep us kind this week? Faithful and merciful and compassionate?

Is our trip up this mountain--- going to keep us honest this week? Gracious, grateful, and giving?

Are we going to be better people this week – because we've looked over and seen the promised land – the very presence of Christ in our midst?

If not – perhaps that's why we need to re-experience the feast of Pentecost every year. It is never too early to pray: come, Holy Spirit.