

Change

St. Luke tells us that “about eight days” after Jesus Christ predicts his Passion in response to Peter proclaiming Jesus to be the Christ, this mysterious revelation we call the “Transfiguration” took place on a mountain top in Galilee. The timing of the narrative in Mark, Matthew, and Luke is almost exactly the same. Jesus tells the disciples that he will be rejected in Jerusalem, he will suffer, be killed, and on the third day be raised. Yet Luke gives us some fascinating details Mark and Matthew do not include.

The purpose of going up the mountain was to pray, to take a retreat from the intense, demanding ministry of healing, teaching and preaching. While Jesus was praying, this revelation of God’s glory with the vision of Moses and Elijah, seemed to change, transform, transfigure Jesus.

Luke also tells us that Moses and Elijah “were speaking of his departure” at Jerusalem. Luke wants us to know that this mysterious vision is connected to the earlier prediction of the Passion. It shows us Jesus’ true messianic identity. The glory on the mountain top prepares us for the glory on the cross and the glory from the empty tomb.

So, too, just as Peter and the other disciples cannot stay awake with Jesus on his last night in the Garden of Gethsemane, here on the mountain top Luke reports that they are “weighed down with sleep.” They almost miss this sign of glory.

Finally, Luke concludes his account with the silence of Peter, James, and John. They didn’t tell anyone what they had seen. Did they doubt the experience, the vision? Are they afraid others won’t believe? Most doubted Mary Magdalene’s report of the Risen Christ on the first Easter morning. Thomas would not believe until he saw Jesus with his own eyes!

Every year before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, we read this Gospel story of the Transfiguration. We pray that we “will be strengthened to bear our cross” and also “be changed into Christ’s likeness from glory to glory.”

The confession of Peter, the first prediction of the Passion and the Transfiguration are major turning points in the synoptic narrative. Lent can be a significant turning point in our own lives. What time is this for us? What is going on in our own lives that invites us to turn to Jesus? To grow in Christ’s glory as we may need to bear our own cross?

St. Luke constantly reminds us of the importance of prayer for Jesus and for us. Prayer strengthened Jesus’ relationship with God. Prayer affirmed the call Jesus had heard. Prayer can do the same for us. The season of Lent calls us to consider, to work on our life of prayer. The life of prayer leads us to a life of service in the world, just as it did for Jesus.

The Transfiguration changed Jesus and it changed Peter, John, and James. They came down from the mountain top and started the journey to Jerusalem, to the cross. What changes us? What needs to change in our lives, in our world? How do we live into this change, blessed by God’s love for us? How, when do we resist change?

In seven short weeks we will gather on Easter Sunday morning. At the Great Vigil on the evening before, Bishop Ihloff will confirm ten J2A students and several adults. Easter brings us the reality of God's transforming power of love. Easter brings the glory of the Spirit's life-giving freedom. Easter brings change.

This is not just a mountain top experience – we are asked to live this change each day. Luke cautions us not to be “weighed down with sleep.” Too tired, too stressed, too distracted, too self-absorbed to see the glory of God right in front of us.

God always seems to have the last word, today, and each day God says, “This is my son; Listen to him!”

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36