

2nd Sunday of Lent

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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An unexpected marvel happened on Mount Tabor. Even though Peter, John, and James were extremely tired, they were able to keep their eyes open to witness the wonders of Jesus' Transfiguration. We meet these same Apostles later, sleeping at Gethsemane in the moments of Jesus' misery and agony. Isn't it so true that it is always easy to have a sense of wonder and awe, and to be excited about God when everything is going well with us?

Peter, John, and James had a heavenly time, witnessing the Transfiguration. This event can also be interpreted as an anticipatory experience of the appearance of the Resurrected Christ in the presence of the two prophets, Moses and Elijah; often taken to signify Christ's fulfillment of the Mosaic Law and the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. It also reminds us that it was imperative that the life of Christ undergo the forthcoming sufferings to be able to fully rejoice in the glory of the Resurrection. Jesus chose Peter, James, and John to witness the mysteries of Salvation, and as followers, to become part of the mission that is attained through suffering, death, and glorious resurrection.

In this Gospel, there are also two choices that were to be made on the mountain: Peter's Choice and Christ's Choice. Peter's choice was to remain basking in the glory and wonder of the moment. Christ's choice was something that Peter never dreamed would happen. Peter's choice was expressed through Peter's desire to stop Jesus from suffering and dying, revealing that Peter's understanding of the messiah was that of a triumphant figure, and not one who would suffer and be killed. When we reflect upon the episode of the Transfiguration of the Lord, like Peter we too may be carried away by the moment and the celestial vision that happened on the mountain. Jesus' face shone like the Sun, His clothes became dazzling white, accompanied by the appearance of Moses and Elijah. The scene was so glorious that Peter wanted to remain on the mountain.

If we narrate Peter's experience dramatically, it may be: "Peter...Peter where did you meet your God?" He would say: "It was on Mount Tabor." "Could you meet your God at Gethsemane?" Peter would say: "Ohh, I couldn't understand a God who suffered, and my eyes were closed."

The life of a disciple is not meant to remain in transcendent glory forever. There is a call to descend: to descend from the mountain of glory and from the mountain of comfort, into the valley of tears, the valley of pain, of suffering, and the valley of the challenges of life. The invitation from the Father to listen to Jesus is an invitation to us, to share in the mission of Christ. It is an invitation to both ascend the mountain of glory, and to descend into the valley of lowliness. There is no salvation and glory without the cross.

Let us reflect: is our discipleship based on Peter's choice, or do we accept Christ's choice for us?

