

Homily080617

WITH MY OWN EYES

Matthew, Mark and Luke all speak of an event on the top of Mount Tabor in the Galilee towards the end of Jesus' public ministry where He is transfigured before Peter, James and John. This event has always stirred many, many questions in my own mind and in my heart. What is really going on here? If the rest of the twelve apostles had been there would they have seen what Peter, James and John saw? None of the three evangelists says that Jesus transfigured himself before them. They use the passive voice. He was transfigured. It was something that happened to him, it was done unto him. Like Mary says at the Annunciation: Let it be done unto me as you say.

Well, that raises other questions for me. What is the meaning of this event? Why do three apostles experience it and nine not experience it? And if the initiative isn't coming from Jesus himself who is taking the initiative? Further questions. Does Jesus change? Or do they change in what they are able to see? Or is it both?

I believe the transfiguration is something that the Father does to his Son, for His Son, his Beloved as he draws close to the end of his public ministry and when He draws near to his great passion as a sign and to send a signal. The sign is a sign that points to what will come—not the suffering so much, but after the suffering. Namely, the resurrection. The Father knows that the apostles are going to be put to the test pretty soon and they are not going to fare so well in that crucible. Look at what Jesus himself says to them at the end of today's reading: "Do not tell the vision to anyone until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

God the Father is planting a seed of hope. A seed that the apostles and the other disciples of Jesus will not realize right away or recognize right away but will come to understand only in the future, only after his travail has ended and he triumphs over the grave. The Transfiguration is Father God's involvement in the ministry and mission of Jesus which will lead to His passion. He allows his Son's actual beauty and light to be seen, to shine forth. The light in Christ is not new. It is always there but veiled most days by God's design so that we can exercise our freedom to choose to believe in him on the basis of his words and deeds.

The Father will be present at the passion too but then He will not intrude as sound or light but silently but will work through Mary and Mary Magdalen and Veronica and Simon of Cyrene and the Beloved Disciple. They will be the Father's witness as Jesus dies. They will be the ones who reach out a helping hand, they will be the ones who remain steadfast as he suffers and the glory is not in sight. The Father will channel his love and presence through them. And in the

process they will be transformed. In the process they will have the seed of God's light planted deep in their souls.

On the mountain, the Father owns His Son, acknowledges His Son, His Beloved. The Father speaks. The Father draws back the veil. The Father gives a word of counsel—Listen to Him. Listen to Him. The Father transports Moses and Elijah from the realm of the dead to stand on either side of his Son. Jesus is not a prophet like them. Jesus is THE prophet of God. That is why we must listen to what He tells us. It reveals the very heart of God, the will of God, the deep desire of God. The Son reveals the Father's heart.

And just what is that deep desire of the Father? It is this. Despite the reality and destructive impact of sin in this world, you and I and all human beings are meant to shine. It is not just Christ. It is you and me. We are meant to shine. I know this much. I cannot do that. Not on my own I can't. But I believe that if I surrender to the grace of God in my life, then I can. Then I can shine. Then my best self emerges. Then my love starts to take hold and abide within me and then it begins to shine forth into the world around me. We even sing that song: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine." It's a little kid's song. But it is much more than a little kid's song.

How does this shining light happen? The Father asks us to open our hearts, open our souls to Him so that He can shine his light inside us. That is what I believed happened on that mountain with Peter, James and John. They opened themselves to that light. The others weren't ready to do that. They would get there some day but they weren't ready. Peter, James and John opened their souls to the Father and it enticed them, enthralled them, overwhelmed them and then frightened them. But they would recover from it and get over their fears. In that moment they made a decision to let the Father's light enter into them.

The Father always waits to be invited in. There on the mountain they did that without fully understanding what it all meant. But they opened their hearts. I have too. And you have too. You have. But sometimes we don't believe we have. Today, the Father sends us a reminder on this feast of Transfiguration. You have surrendered to me. Do not be afraid to live in that love. I need your love to shine.