

Transfiguration - A
Daniel 7:9-10; 13-14;
2 Peter 1:16-19;
Matthew 17:1-9
Little Flower - 8/6/23

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Many of you may remember that in 2002 Pope St. John Paul II added the Luminous Mysteries to the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. He included the Transfiguration of Jesus as the fourth Luminous Mystery. Also, every year on the Second Sunday of Lent, the Gospel is always the story of the Transfiguration.

According to Matthew's Gospel, the Transfiguration took place six days after Peter professed faith in Jesus: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" [16:16; JB]. When Jesus then prophesied his passion, death, and resurrection, Peter refused to accept that Jesus was going to suffer and die. Jesus' transfiguration helped to prepare the disciples for his passion and death by giving them a glimpse of his post-resurrection glory.

Also, the appearance of Moses and Elijah with him revealed him to be the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. For the Jews, Moses was the ultimate lawgiver, and Elijah was the ultimate prophet. As Jesus said in Matthew's Gospel, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill*" [5:17].

When Peter was asking about building three tents, "*a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'*" God the Father affirmed Jesus as his beloved Son. Therefore, not only is he the Christ, the Messiah. He is also the Son of God. More importantly, God the Father calls us to listen to Jesus, i.e., to take Jesus seriously.

In the first reading, we heard Daniel's vision of the Son of Man. In the second reading, Peter reflected on the meaning of the Transfiguration many years later. Today we are invited to reflect on the meaning of the Transfiguration for us. The Transfiguration gives us a glimpse of the resurrected Christ, Christ in glory. I am going to suggest this feast calls us to be transfigured, transformed, into the likeness of the Risen Christ.

We do that by becoming holy or, to use Matthew Kelly's phrase for holiness, the-best-version-of-ourselves. In the Old Testament, God said, "*Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy*" [Lev. 19:2]. As Joseph Goldbrunner wrote, *Holiness is Wholeness*. Holiness is living in right relationships with God, others, the world, and ourselves.

Jesus interprets this both in Matthew's and Luke's Gospel. In Matthew, Jesus said, "*So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect*" [Mt. 5:48]. In Luke, Jesus said, "*Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful*" [Lk. 6:36] or "*Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate*" [Lk. 6:36; JB]. According to our way of thinking, only God can be perfect whereas we can be merciful. However, in Old Testament usage, mercy or compassion was the quality most proper to God while perfection was a goal to be sought by us as human beings.

Therefore, we are as close to perfect as we can when we are the-best-version-of-ourselves. We are merciful when we are forgiving and when we are generous to others, especially to those in need. Finally, we are compassionate when we are sensitive and responsive to the needs of others.

My brothers and sisters, besides being the Feast of the Transfiguration, today is my 74th birthday. As I get older, two things I am coming to realize more and more is that most people, at least the people you and I meet and know, are trying their best to live well and that all of us are very imperfect. For example, if we did not know it before, we now know that even the best people make mistakes and commit sins. We now know that even leaders of church and state are flawed, including popes and presidents. We now know more than ever that we are all sinful people. Therefore, if we want to be holy, the-best-version-of-ourselves, perfect, merciful, and compassionate, we have to give other people and ourselves grace.