

TRANSFIGURATION/VIII TRINITY 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

2 ST. PETER 1.13 ST. LUKE 9.28



“Go tell it on the Mountain”...is the African-American spiritual song compiled by John Wesley Work, Jr. The song dates to at least 1865 and has become a much-loved fixture at our Children’s Mass at the Crèche on Christmas Eve...“Go tell it on the Mountain...that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

Mountains have always evoked a sense of awe and inspiration. Mountains are where people go to get closer to God:

- God gave Moses the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai...and people couldn’t look at Moses because his face shone with bright white light.
- Elijah was taken up into heaven from a mountaintop in a fiery chariot surrounded by bright white light.
- Jesus went into the mountains to pray before he began his public ministry and on the night before he died.

Alaska’s Mount McKinley...Denali in the Athabascan language...meaning “The High One”...challenged Father Hudson Stuck to co-lead the first successful climb to its 20,000-foot summit in 1913.

Anyone who has flown into Seattle on a clear day cannot help but be struck by the majesty of the snow-covered mountains that form the “Ring of Fire”...and what happened when Mount Saint Helens blew its top in 1980.

Mountains are places we go to get away from frustrating traffic jams and clear our minds. Retreat houses are often located in mountains away from busy cities. Quiet time away from our hectic lives can give us the opportunity to commune with God in the natural environment he created.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus takes his closest friends, Peter, James and John up into a mountain to pray. The Transfiguration is the end of Jesus’ public ministry. He would still teach and heal...but he would spend most of his time getting his disciples ready for what was about to happen.

Luke tells us Jesus’ appearance was dramatically transformed. His face was bright like the sun and his clothes “dazzling white”. Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus and talked with him about what was about to happen...his Crucifixion.

The bright light and sudden appearance of Moses and Elijah jolts Peter awake from a sound sleep. Happy to see Moses and Elijah, he thinks it would be a good idea to set up camp...to hold on to the moment.

But Moses and Elijah disappear and a bright cloud appears. God speaks from the cloud and calls Jesus his own Son...and to listen to him. God spoke the same words about Jesus when he was baptized shortly before he began his public ministry. Now it was time for Jesus to complete the work he was sent to accomplish.

The Transfiguration is unique among the miracles recorded in Holy Scripture...it is a miracle that happens to Jesus himself. Saint Thomas Aquinas called it the “greatest miracle”...because it compliments baptism and points to the perfection of life in heaven.

Jesus told his disciples not to talk about what they had just witnessed until after his Resurrection. Jesus knew they couldn’t fully understand the miracle they had just seen...not yet...but they would one day...and they would then go tell others.

We believe the miracle of the Transfiguration because of the eyewitness accounts of Peter and the other disciples who witnessed it firsthand. Peter tells us he did not make up the story...what he says is the truth...for us to remember and believe.

The Transfiguration gives us a brief glimpse of Jesus in his glorified body...surrounded by bright light. It also gives us a glimpse of what we have to look forward to in heaven. We can only imagine what our glorified and changed bodies will be like.

But for now...we don’t have to wait until Christmas...to “Go tell it on the Mountain...Jesus Christ is Lord.”

