

TRANSFIGURATION/X TRINITY 2018
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
2 PETER 1.13-18 St. LUKE 9.28-36



It's about a week before the event recorded in today's Gospel. Jesus has just fed more than 5000 people...he needed some time alone to pray.

Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was...they gave different answers. Peter answered he is God's Messiah...the One who will save us. Jesus gave a curious response to Peter's bold declaration...he told his disciples not to tell anyone.

Let's fast forward to today. We find Jesus hiking up a mountain...with him are his three closest friends...Peter, James and John. They alone were about to witness an event they would keep quiet about until much later...after the Ascension.

Mountains are mentioned more than 500 times in Holy Scripture. Mountains are where people went to get "closer to God". Mountains were places people could retreat from their busy lives and reorder their lives around God. Even today convents and monasteries are often located high in the mountains.

Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. When he came down from the mountain...his appearance was altered...his face shined so brightly people couldn't look at him. Elijah was taken up into the skies in a fiery chariot surrounded by bright white clouds. Mountains, clouds, and light have always been associated with God's presence.

The Transfiguration is ultimately about seeing Jesus for who he is and seeing ourselves for who we are. Luke tells us Jesus' whole appearance was transfigured...changed...a complete metamorphosis. It is a miracle that happens to Jesus...and Jesus is seen in all his glory...his face bright like the sun and his clothes "dazzling white".

Moses and Elijah had their own close encounters with God in the mountains...they appear and speak with Jesus and talk with him about his impending death as the way it must be to make everything they stood for...God's Law and all the prophetic writings about the Messiah...come true.

Peter's bold declaration about Jesus...that he is God's Messiah...Our Savior...is seen in the birth, life, death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. Peter didn't know at the time what he was really saying...we get the message loud and clear.

The Transfiguration concludes Jesus' public ministry. He would continue to teach, mostly to his disciples. He would now head toward Jerusalem and do exactly what Moses and Elijah had said he must do to complete his mission.

The Transfiguration is a pivotal moment in Jesus' life and ours...the point where human beings meet God...the place where earth meets heaven. Jesus is the bridge between earth and heaven...he is the ladder of Jacob's dream in Genesis that connects heaven and earth. Jesus is the one who connects God to us...and makes it possible for us to one day see God in heaven.

Before Moses and Elijah left...our friend Peter wanted to set up camp for them...he wanted to keep the experience for himself...but he couldn't...neither can we. God shows us Jesus is his own Son and we should listen to him.

Later Peter would write down what he experienced and what we should do:

"We have not depended on made-up stories in making known to you the mighty coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. With our own eyes we saw his greatness...when we were with him in the holy mountain. So we are even more confident of the message proclaimed by the prophets. You will do well to pay attention to it, because it is like a lamp shining in a dark place until the Day dawns and the light of the morning shines in your hearts." (2 Peter 2.16-19)

Peter and James and John saw for themselves who Jesus is...and they believed...so do we! The Transfiguration of Jesus on a mountain opens a window into heaven and gives us a tantalizing clue as to what our own transfigurations will be like.

Then we will get to see God in all of his light and glory and we won't have to turn away...because we too will have been changed...forever.

And we can't keep this to ourselves. We are to tell everyone who will listen.

