

## Second Sunday in Lent – A

A story like the transfiguration of Jesus is so rich that there are a number of different perspectives one can take when thinking about it.

For one thing, the fact that Jesus is on the mountain speaking with Moses and Elijah says a lot about his relationship with the law, represented by Moses, and the prophets, represented by Elijah.

But the story says a lot about what it means to be a disciple, too.

Moses and Elijah both spent time on the mountain of Sinai, and it was there that they found direction for the affairs on the plains.

That's what is about to happen to Peter, James and John as well.

They are given access to a deeper experience of who Jesus is as he is transfigured in their sight.

But with this experience comes a command—one they will have to obey time and time again.

When the disciples hear the voice coming from the cloud, they fall to the ground and are overcome with fear. Coming into contact with the transcendence of God causes that kind of response.

But Jesus, who is both divine and human, balances that divine transcendence with accessibility.

He goes to the disciples, gets them on their feet and tells them “Do not be afraid.”

At that point in the story, he's there alone. Ultimately, Jesus is the one who has been sent by God to guide us beyond fear and into love.

Usually, when people go to the mountain and experience a vision, they return to tell the people.

However, Jesus commands the disciples to be silent. The voice from the cloud instructed the disciples to listen to Jesus. They are not yet ready to talk about what they have experienced.

For the moment they must listen, and that's not always easy. What Jesus has to say is often difficult to fathom and, at times, even more difficult to swallow.

For example, the disciples have not been able to grasp Jesus' predictions about his upcoming suffering, death and resurrection. They've even argued with him about it.

They have not listened. Now Jesus tells them again to listen. Perhaps that was the reason they were given the vision on the mountaintop—so that they could overcome their resistance to what Jesus is teaching.

The disciples have seen Jesus' glory so that they might understand and

## Second Sunday in Lent – A

persevere with him on his path.

So, the real action is not on the mountain but in the upcoming events of Jesus' death and resurrection in Jerusalem. It's in those events that the revelation of God and the truth of Jesus will be most clearly seen.

The real action in our lives also takes place elsewhere than "on the mountain."

Suppose we think about the Eucharist as a "mountaintop experience." It also is designed to give us a chance to listen to Jesus and be bolstered by his presence—so that we can persevere on the path of discipleship.

Life hits us "out there" where difficulty resides. We need to "gear up" for it by making the intentional effort to listen to Jesus and benefit from his close company with us.

Without that, things wind down like a coo-coo clock. Relationships become routine, predictable, and in many cases dissolve.

Personal goals remain unrealized dreams. Nothing moves forward.

And it can get even tougher than that when we factor in the call to compassion and when we face situations of suffering. Or when we are committed to peace and we face situations of division and hostility.

Life is difficult when we try to bring to it what is best in us. Virtue is hard work!

The disciples do not understand Jesus' insistence on suffering death and resurrection. He takes them to the mountain to reveal to them the divine origins of his path.

Not to hold on to the experience, but to use it as a resource, to "listen" to it as we recommit ourselves to the challenge of goodness, the long-haul of living according to the law of love.

Jesus and his disciples descended the mountain, and then continued their journey toward Jerusalem and what awaited them there.

Here we are on the mountain of God's grace, gathering guidance and strength for what lies ahead on the journey of faith.