

***Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord,
Matthew 17:1-9 OLPH - 2017***



The Gospel account of the Transfiguration is very colorful. It conveys to us the meeting of Heaven and Earth and how the glory of Heaven powerfully touches those who enter into it. I suspect that the account of the Transfiguration falls far short in describing the reality and beauty of the event. This isn't the fault of Peter, James and John minimizing their experience, or the evangelist failing to adequately describe it, but rather the simple reality that the finite human mind cannot comprehend the fullness of what was

experienced, let alone find the words to describe the indescribable. How can anyone adequately describe an encounter with God? Jesus took Peter, James and John to a mount top. These were three of the original apostles who left everything to follow Jesus.

They were invited to share in this glorious and somewhat intimate moment in which the infinite glory of Heaven broke through the finite reality of this world. Jesus becomes dazzling white and his face shines like the sun. Out of nowhere Moses and Elijah appear to Jesus and the three have a conversation of which we are not told its' subject. The Apostles know that something extremely beautiful and important is taking place and Peter says, "Lord, it is good that we are here." He then offers to build three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. The Apostles seemed to be comfortable and did not want this moment to end. It was the voice of the Father that brought fear into their hearts. The message of the Father was a beautiful affirmation of who Jesus is, the same message the Father gave when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." What led to their fear? It could have been hearing a disembodied voice that probable surrounded them and filled them. A voice that they probably had never heard before.

Jesus comforts them and says to them a line that they will hear numerous times from him; "...do not be afraid." For Peter, James and John, this was the mountain top experience that affirmed their closeness to Jesus, and prepared them for what was to come. They would not truly comprehend the significance of this until after the resurrection, and even then could never find the words to adequately express what they experienced. When someone has a powerful religious experience it is sometimes referred to as a

mountain top experience. These are experiences in which God touches us and it seems that we are in Heaven.

They put our fears, anxieties, problems and struggles in the perspective that in God's presence they will be handled and in some way we will get through them. It is an experience that fills us with renewed faith and fervor, and with joy and hope. These are experiences that we sometimes seek, but that more often occur when least expected. It could be at a Mass while we struggle to be attentive, a Baptism or Wedding, or during the Sacrament of Confession. It could be while on a retreat or day of recollection, or listening to a song on the radio. It is not necessary to climb a mountain in order to have a mountain top experience, all one has to do is be attentive so that we don't miss the time and place when God wants to enter more deeply into our lives. We might never find the words to describe our experience, but we will know that we had an encounter with God.