

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. ...”listen to him!”

There were four of us, in a small white car, driven by one of my sons, who had previously navigated the narrow, hazardous roads to the mountain top. When I dared, and when I could still my breath and tamp down my sensation of panic, I took a quick glance out the window; no guard rails only brush and native plants creating a safety net. And from time-to-time, there was a shrine, a metal box with a candle and a photo or a name of one who had lost his or her life at that treacherous curve...and among these personal losses, there were shrines that expressed thanksgiving of some sort or a saint was remembered for a gift bestowed.

When we (my sons, husband and I) reached our destination, the mountain-top view was awesome, breathtaking and worthy of quiet contemplation and internal inquiry. We’d had to travel up the mountain so that we could take the walking journey downward to visit the ancient Gouverne Monastery. One couldn’t help but be silent, to listen to unspoken words, sounds, presence.

In today’s Gospel story, we’re told that Jesus takes his three close friends and **leads** them up a high mountain apart, and there, he is transfigured. Jesus’ clothes become dazzling white and it’s not because of a visit by the Fuller Brush Man with a suitcase full of bleach and cleaning products. A voice, from the cloud, instructs the three to **listen** to Jesus. I suppose one can imagine all kinds of voices-loud, commanding, firm...my imagining is a personal whisper, soft spoken, yet not to be mistaken, insistence. I believe we’re asked to pay close attention to the word-Listen...listening isn’t the same as hearing. Might it be that one is done with the ear and the other, along with the ear, uses the heart and a more internal compass as navigator to the compassionate, sensory, creation connected sense?

The group of disciples has spent much of themselves, traveling around, healing, feeding, and learning from Jesus. Jesus knew it was time to be apart, to share an intimate time with those whom he loved, to enlighten them, to help them see how a relationship with God transfigures, not merely transforms a child of God. The busyness, the clamor, the pressing needs and responses, aren’t to be ignored or belittled-after all, this is the work, the ministry that followers of Jesus are required, are blessed to do, each according to his or her own gifts. And also of great importance, as Jesus shows by example, are the times to separate oneself from the daily grind, however important, to be with the one who gives life and energy to our being as we plug into the divine Love, the essence that goes far beyond the sentimental, Valentine’s Day, Hallmark variety of emotion. I try to remember and I invite you to do the same, as Sr. Joan Chittister emphasizes, Love has a fierce side to it, a justice side. And, that, Goodness, Love, stands up to wickedness and evil.

It seems safe to say that likely each of us has been led up a mountain at some time-hopefully more than one time. Led and invited to not merely experience an awesome, inspiring, thrilling space of time, though this is wonderful when it occurs; but rather to take uncertain yet faithful

steps, feet sliding on the gravel and stones, dislodging those thoughts and perceptions of which we are so sure; to re-establish footing on the sure foundation of Jesus' teaching and example. Allowing the dust of judgement to settle, our vision is more clear. We're gifted to stop at the scenic overlooks, where we behold the land before our eyes, discerning the patches of pain, personal, communal, and global, acknowledging the alleyways of narrow mindedness, grappling with the vision of what is, and of what God seeks as his Kingdom on Earth. To be reminded of, to bear remembrance to, the knowledge that we are vessels, instruments of the life-changing treasures to be co-creators of thy kingdom come...

Henri Nouwen shares this observation. "In our world we are constantly pulled away from our innermost self and encouraged to look for answers instead of listening to the questions." Maria Rainer Wilke reminds us that, "What is going on in your innermost being is worthy of your whole love."

Might it be that Jesus is extending his hand in invitation to travel with him up the mountain so that we may with open-hearted expectancy and humility, and in silence, experience that transfiguration?

Rev. Doctor Robert Davis Hughes III says transfiguration illuminates life, not by natural, inherent light, but is part of the ongoing incarnating process. Ministries of compassion, giving, nurturing, and the like emerge from the Spirit's transfiguring presence. "What happens is not transformation but the illumination of Jesus by the divine glory, in the power of the Spirit, which reveals to the disciples the truth about who Jesus has been all along. In the same fashion, our own beginning transfiguration in that same light is not a transformation into something else, but the revelation and birthing to our own true selves."

Contemplate this: Silent and Listen contain the same letters. Might we, as Lent approaches, and in the quiet of our hearts, wait for the still, small voice of God-that inner awareness of word not spoken yet perceived-discern in what ways we're called to make God's unconditional love visible? Forgiving instead of getting angry, blessing instead of cursing, tending to the wounds of another instead of rubbing salt into them, hearten instead of discouraging each other, give hope rather than driving one another to despair, welcome rather than giving the cold shoulder, thanking instead of criticizing, praising rather than maligning another...

The voice of God breaking into our world changes us. Let us pray we accept the invitation to climb the mountain with Jesus and be still. And then, by and with the power of the Holy Spirit, descend from the mountain, prepared and empowered to change the world...thy kingdom come...

Amen.

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