

*Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray.* This wonderfully ambiguous sentence launches us into a very profound event in Jesus' ministry, an event that is more about the disciples than Jesus, and more about us than we realize. So, the first question is – who is doing the praying? Well, Jesus for sure, but also the three apostles, if unwittingly. If prayer is a conversation with God, they're in for a very big prayer experience, aren't they?

*While he was praying, his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzlingly white.* Now remember, this is not the resurrected, divinely altered Jesus who is unbound by space and time. This is the fully flesh and bones, physically real Jesus known to be “of human estate”. This is an epiphany, a manifestation of Jesus infused with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is so close to God at this point that his human self cannot hold it back – he literally *glows*. And then Moses and Elijah show up for a chat. I absolutely love this little scene. Sorry, ladies, this is truly a guy thing happening here. What are they doing? They're going over the plan! It's like a football huddle. “Don't forget to look for the donkey when you get to Jerusalem...” And right here, right now, we're told, Peter and his companions move from sleep to wakefulness. Perfect! The transfiguration wakes them up! Now they get it! Right? Wrong!!

Peter makes a big mistake, an understandable mistake, to be sure, but a mistake just the same. He pipes up and offers to erect three tents, one for Jesus, one for Elijah, and one for Moses. The mistake is not the offer, the mistake is that Peter *equates* Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. Each of you guys gets a tent. You can picture God the Father slapping his forehead. Picture an immense cloud swooping down on them, with all of the great Hollywood effects, scaring the wits out of the poor apostles. And then the voice, oh that voice, booming, thundering, cracking rocks and uprooting trees, proclaims that *this is my chosen Son, listen to him*. Yes, by all means pay attention to Moses the lawgiver, and Elijah the miracle worker, but Jesus, *Jesus* is the one to listen to, to really and truly obey, because he isn't just a prophet or a leader, he's part of me, The Creator God. And then, we're told, the disciples fell silent, because after you have a theophany like that, words are useless.

It's very easy to settle for an interpretation of an event and miss the deeper meaning, the really profound message that often hinges on a detail, a simple trigger that we miss. I remember the weekend when my mother passed away. I was on a retreat at Whispering Winds up in Julian when the word

came that her death was imminent. I immediately left the retreat and drove for home, down the mountain. As I wound down the curvy road, my sister called me again and told me that the local family was all gathered around her bedside and I was represented by her cell phone. We all sang Amazing Grace to her together. I had to pull over to keep myself together. It wasn't until months later that I saw the connection between her dying moments and the Transfiguration Story. God put me on the mountain and led me down to the plain, facilitated by the most Godly woman I ever knew, my Mom.

I wonder – how many of you saw that little detail, that profound hidden moment, in our first reading today? Listen. *The Lord God took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,” he added, “shall your descendants be.” Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.* Seems simple enough, doesn't it? Abram goes out, sees the stars glittering all over the heavens, and gets the point. Done. But wait, why does the Lord credit Abram's faith as an act of righteousness? What's the act of faith? You need to keep reading to understand. The remaining part of the reading is a description of an elaborate covenant ritual that takes place *that evening*. So, hold on, when did the Lord ask Abram to go out and count the stars? Now do you get it? Yes, during the daylight! Listen again. *The Lord God took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can.* Obviously, Abram can't – there are none to see! Abram's act of faith is to believe that the stars are there just the same, and this is what the Lord applauds. This triggers the covenant ceremony.

So here's your question. What are you seeing over and over again? What are you seeing now and not truly seeing? What are you missing because you are thinking too literally or thinking too small? What is God inviting you to see that you just can't get? Here's one for you. Let's look at the Church today – the ongoing sexual abuse crisis remains distressingly topical and shameful. If you're like me, you're angry. Angry at the abusers, angry at clueless bishops, angry at being told this is fixed when it clearly is not. What is God trying to tell us right here and now? Look closely. Whether this problem is rooted in family histories, or stunted sexual growth, or clericalism, or bad seminaries, or abuse of power, there is one common denominator – it is a *male* problem. And no, I don't mean gay men. I mean *men*, period. Maybe our God is telling us that it is about time to bring the other 50 percent of the Church faithful into the solution search. Because I'm sad to say that I'm not sure that men can fix this issue. But I am sure that

men, women, and the Holy Spirit working together can *absolutely* fix this problem. We need to hear from mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, girls, and all women of faith. What should we do? What does our Church need to do? If you had the Pope and a dozen of his cardinals sitting in a row up here, what would you advise them to do?

I'm totally serious. Please pray on this and think hard. My email address is in the bulletin. Send me your ideas. Drop them by the office. Here's what I'll do. I'll compile your suggestions into a single document and send it to our bishop and the U.S Catholic Conference of Bishops. The timing can't be any better – they're meeting in June to decide what to do about this crisis in the American Church. For you men out here today, I'm happy to see your ideas too – please send them to me as well and I'll compile them in a separate document. Women, men, and the Holy Spirit acting together.

In this season of repentance, of turning to God, our Church is hurting. Please pray that we can see the Transfiguration opportunity facing us. Please listen to Jesus. And never forget. We are the Church! *We* are.