



Aug. 6, 2017 Mt. 17: 1-9 & Dan. 7: 9-10, 13-14

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall)

Stone, Naomi. [Transfiguration](#)

.Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Eucharistic Prayer.....](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

As you enter this text, try to imagine yourself being chosen to accompany Jesus up the mountainside. What are you expecting as you climb? As you arrive at the top, Jesus seems to take on a radiance that emanates from within. It is as if you can now see into him instead of just seeing him. This causes you to fall face down in awe as you sense that you are in the presence of the divine. Reme Daumal says "One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art in conduction oneself in lower regions by memory of what one has seen higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know."

You have experienced the connection between what is happening right now, with all that has come before. Are you relieved that you are told not to talk about your experience yet?

#### Mt. 17: 1-9

1 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun,

and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. 4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." 8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Peter, James and John came down from the mountain changed because of their experience. Have you ever had an experience that did that to you, and if so how did your life change because of it?

**PRAYER:** Jesus, you took three of your disciples with you when you went up on that mountain to check in with the Father on what to do next. Moses and Elijah helped you find the direction you needed. A sense of peace and confirmation settled upon you and threw the disciples face down upon the ground. I often feel like they did as you invite me to go with you into the future. Help me as I too try to "get up" and follow you. Amen

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**SIX DAYS:** The ancients often gave numbers symbolic significance. Six often represented imperfection or secular completeness. It is 7 (perfection) minus 1.

*How does knowing the meaning of six, help to expand your understanding of this event?*

**JESUS / LORD / SON OF MAN / SON:** Jesus calls himself, Son of man. The disciples call him, Lord. God calls Jesus, Son. Matthew calls him Jesus.

*How do these different names reveal what the Transfiguration is all about? What does each of them mean to you? If you were to order them in some sequence, how would order them?*

**DISCIPLES:** The word disciple means someone who is learning (under discipline) from someone.

*Would you have liked to be one of the disciples? Are you now a disciple?*

**PETER / JAMES / JOHN:** These three disciples will figure prominently in special moments in the gospels. They were the ones Jesus chose to be close in at significant points in his ministry.

*What burden/privilege does being 'close' to someone special impose or grant? Is the benefit worth the cost? Have you ever been 'close in' and had to deal with the benefit/burden of that privilege?*

**UP / DOWN:** The disciples go up the mountain with Jesus and find themselves thrown face down. First glory, then terror.  
*Does your faith development take you on such a roller coaster ride as well? Are the moments of glory worth the times of fear?*

**MOUNTAIN:** Mountains were thought to be the closest a human could get to God.  
*Where do you go to get close to God?*



*(Hebrew word for light)*

**TRANSFIGURED / SHONE LIKE THE SUN / WHITE AS THE LIGHT:** Jesus' appearance was radically changed or made transparent. The disciples got a glimpse of God through Jesus' radiance.  
*Have you ever gotten a glimpse of God through someone or something radiant? If so, can you still recall that experience?*

**MOSES / ELIJAH:** Both these people were thought to be connected with the coming of the Messiah.  
*What effect does this have on the disciples as they experience this vision?*

**APPEARED / SAW NO ONE:** Suddenly out of the cloud there is the appearance, and then just as suddenly there was no one there. It seems like humanity can only bear glimpses of God's revelation.  
*What do you think the disciples talked about among themselves as they tried to make sense out of this experience in the days ahead? Do you think it helped that all three saw the same thing?*

**CLOUD:** The Hebrew Scriptures tell of a cloud that shielded the people from the too much-ness of God. When we are enveloped in a cloud (fog) we can only see what is up close to us.  
*How do these explanations help open you to what is happening in this story? Does the 'cloud' shield you or help you to see up close?*

**ENVELOPED:** To envelop something is to wrap it up in a covering.  
*Do you experience being 'enveloped' as a protective/nurturing thing? Does Matthew suggest that it is?*

**VOICE:** Jesus has just voiced the awareness of his passion and Resurrection for the first time in 16: 21f. Now he experiences God's voice once again he did at his baptism. This seems to enable him to press on.  
*What does Jesus hear that enables him to press on?*

**I LOVE / WELL PLEASED / LISTEN:** The disciples hear the voice of God proclaim love and pleasure with Jesus, and then the command to listen to Jesus.  
*Do you think they listened to Jesus more sincerely/closely after this experience? What clues does this gospel give you to help you answer this question?*

**FELL DOWN / LOOKED UP / GET UP:** Matthew describes the situation so well that we can almost picture ourselves on that mountain with the disciples.  
*Try to remember a time when you fell down, looked up, and then got up. How does this help you to get in touch with the truth of this story?*

**TERRIFIED / DON'T BE AFRAID:** The disciples become terrified by the too much-ness of their experience of God. It was believed that a person could not survive such closeness. Jesus reassures them that they will be all right. (See below)  
*How do you think this changes the disciples understanding of their experience?*

**TOUCHED:** Jesus uses touch in so many ways in his dealings with people.  
*Name the ways Jesus uses touch in his ministry. What is it about touch that makes it so powerful?*

**INSTRUCTED / DON'T TELL ANYONE:** Jesus learns from God what he needs to know to continue on. He then teaches the disciples to keep what they have experienced quiet for now.  
*Why do you think he wanted them to keep quiet for now?*

**RAISED FROM THE DEAD:** Jesus is confident that death was not the end. This enabled him to continue on with his ministry and proclamation of God's will in spite of the obvious dangers.  
*How does knowing God loves you without condition (Jesus' teaching), help you to continue on in your faith journey?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 17: 1-9// Mk. 9: 2-8; Lk. 9: 28-36; Jn. 1: 14b;**

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Dan. 7: 9-10, 13-14: [Ps. 97: 1-2, 5-6, 9](#); 2 Pt. 1: 16-19; Mt. 17: 1-9;  
Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 32: 22-31; [Ps. 105: 1-11, 45b](#); Rom. 8:26-39; Mt. 13:31-33,44-52

17.1-8: The Transfiguration (Mk 9.2-8; Lk 9.28-34). 1: Peter... James... John, like Moses, Jesus takes three named disciples for a revelatory experience (cf. Ex 24.1). *High mountain*, associated with Moses and Elijah (see 5.i-2n.; Ex 19.20; 24.9-18; 1 Kings 19.8-18). 2: *Transfigured*, Ck "metamorphod," "change in form or appearance" (cf. Rom 12.2; 2 Cor 3.18). *His face shone*, allusion to Moses (Ex 34-35); *like the sun*, {L.A.B. 12.1; 19.16; b. B. Bat. 75a; cf. Dan 10.6; 2 Cor 3.18; Rev 10.1; 2 En. 19.1; 3 En. 18.25; 22.4-9; 26.2-7; 35.2; 4 Ezra 9.7}. 3: *Moses and Elijah*, suggesting that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (cf. 5.17; 7.12; 17.12; Deut 18.15, 18; Apoc. Zeph. 9.5). 5: Ps. 2.7. *Bright cloud*, indicating God's presence (Ex. 40: 35-38; cf. Rev. 14:14; ant. 4.326), Listen to him, see 3:17; cf. Deut. 18:15 of the prophet like Moses; 2 Pt. 1: 17-18. (Pgs. 31-32)

Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Marc Zvi. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2011

### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The awe experienced at the Transfiguration is not the fear of danger, the dread of death. Rather, it is the vision of an expanded horizon, far beyond their ability to manage such news very well. It is a vision of life without limit. And it points to Easter, the fullness of life that comes after the dark days ahead. It is their promise, and it is ours.

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2001. Pg. 64. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)



Blessed are you if you contemplate the Lord until you are radiant; the Lord will make his face shine in yours for the glory of all P. 251

Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. *The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies*. Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

(16<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Icon)

...in rabbinic literature, Moses and Elijah often appear in the same passage, and are frequently compared. Elijah also appears at times with the Messiah. But, so far as I have been able to discover, in only one place in all of rabbinic literature, do Moses, Elijah and the Messiah appear together. Pg. 32

The rabbis, like the gospel writers, also knew of traditions in which the Messiah shone and had luminous garments. One rabbinic text mentions the shining of the person of the Messiah (*Psikta Rabbati 37:1*) and another describes the figure of the Messiah bedecked in radiant garments (*Psikta de Rav Kahana 22.*). Further, the face of Moses shone when he descended from the holy mountain after his encounter with God (Ex. 34:29). Pg. 34. Bassler, Herbert W. *The Jewish Roots of the Transfiguration*. Bible Review. June 1998.

This intimate listening is expressed beautifully when Jesus speaks of God as his Father, his beloved Father. When used by Jesus, the word obedience has no association with fear, but rather is the expression of his most intimate, loving relationship. It is the relationship with his caring Father who said during his baptism at the river Jordan. "This is my Son, the Beloved" Mt. 3:17, and during his prayer on Mount Tabor, "This is my Son, the Beloved. ...Listen to him" Mt. 17: 5. Jesus' actions and words are the obedient response to this love of his Father. We cannot emphasize enough that when Jesus calls God his Father, he speaks about a love that includes and transcends all the love we know. It is the love of a father, but also of a mother, brother, sister, friend, and lover. It is severe yet merciful, jealous yet sharing, prodding yet guiding, challenging yet caring, disinterested yet supportive, selfless yet very intimate. The many kinds of love we have experienced in our various human relationships are fully represented in the love between Jesus and his heavenly Father, but also fully transcended by this same love. Pg. 36-7. Nouwen, Henri, et al. *Compassion*. NY. Image Books. 1983.

The entire summer 2001, Vol 26, No. 2 issue of *Parabola* is devoted to light. Authors representing most of the major world traditions/religions examine the role of light in human understanding.



**A RADIANT CLOUD** rings the mount as Jesus is transfigured. In this copper engraving from Anvers's *Histoire de Nouveau Testament*, published in 1700, the prominent cloud suggests the moment during the Transfiguration ...Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. O.P. *What Really Happened at the Transfiguration?* Bible Review. Fall 1987. Pages 9f.

Is it mere fancy that those westerners who have had an encounter of the 'other-worldly' kind as part of the near-death experience have felt that the mysterious 'Being of light' was either Jesus, or God, or both somehow rolled into one? Is it mere coincidence that all the synoptic Gospels report an extraordinary light-associated occurrence during Jesus' normal earthly existence when he appeared transfigured before them – 'his face shone like the sun and his clothes...white as the light'? Can it be similar mere chance that the fourth Gospel writer, apparently one of the witness of this event, writing nearly two thousand years before Raymond Moody, specifically speaks of Jesus as 'the true light that enlightens all men', emphatically stating: 'We saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father'?

Wilson, Ian. *The After Death Experience: The Physics of the Non-Physical*. NY. William Morrow & Co. Inc. 1987.

It is to us that the baptismal voice is addressed, saying, "You are my beloved child with whom I am well pleased." And if we really hear that, we will be driven into a wilderness wherein we will struggle with the question of what that means and what its implications are. And eventually we will find as was foreshadowed at our birth that we are lying in the manger as food for the world. Brute, Beatrice. *Radical Optimism*. Crossroad, NY. 1993. Page. Pg. 59.

The transfiguration is the experience of joy in finding the answer to the troubling question. Suffering Servant and Messiah – suffering and glory – are not mutually exclusive. They are not contradictory. They are not only compatible, but complementary and belong together not by some strange contrivance but in the wisdom of God's ways. It is simply the only and best way to come to glory. Sin hasn't changed the plan of creation, but given the dimension of sin, the glory achieved in the plan is even greater. There is no way to come to resurrection except through the experience of death. Faith unto death and into death is entrance to our resurrection. Again, the resurrection is not merely historical fact but the reality of the present achievement of faith. Parr, Raymond. *Process Person Presence*. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990.

"The Gospels are the top of the mountain of which the other biblical writings form the slopes." Vincent van Gogh

"I need to be trusting enough to know that God will give me more than I ever dreamed of if I am just faithful to the people I am here for." Henri Nouwen

"Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly."

"Even a thought, even a possibility, can shatter us and transform us." Friedrich Nietzsche

"One does not become enlightened by imaging figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious." C.G. Jung

"You've got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down." Ray Bradbury

In 333 C.E. a pilgrim, known only as the Pilgrim of Bordeaux in Gaul, (modern France) wrote a personal account of a journey to the Holy Land. This text is the earliest extant pilgrimage account by a Christian. In it we find: "From thence you ascent to the Mount of Olives, where before the Passion, the Lord taught his disciples (Mt. 24-5). There by the orders of Constantine a basilica of wonderous beauty has been built. Not far from thence is the little hill which the Lord ascended to pray, when he took Peter and John with him, and Moses and Elias were beheld (Mt. 17: 1-8).

Aaron Demsky. *Christian and Jewish Views of the Holy Land*. Bible Review. 10/02. Pages 32ff.

I asked the almond tree to tell me about God and it began to bloom. Ancient Chinese saying

We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time. [If we center our attention on Him and draw our attention away from our surface selves] ...we see it sometimes and we see it maybe frequently: that God manifests Himself everywhere, in everything -- in people and in things and in nature and in events... He is everywhere, He is in everything, and we cannot be without Him... The only thing is that we don't see it." Thomas Merton –

"To look at something as though we had never seen it before requires great courage." —Henri Matisse

Few souls understand what God would accomplish in them if they were to abandon themselves unreservedly to Him and if they were to allow His grace to mold them accordingly. - Ignatius of Loyola

Surrendering to the divine Flow is not about giving up, giving in, capitulating, becoming a puppet, being naïve, being irresponsible, or stopping all planning and thinking. Surrender is about a peaceful inner opening that keeps the conduit of living water flowing. It is a quiet willingness to trust that you really are a beloved son or a beloved daughter, which allows God to be your Father and Mother. It really is that simple, which for the human ego is very hard. Richard Rohr

## **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2008. Pgs 42-45.. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 20011. Pgs.62-64.To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Janice Grana Ed. *Images*. St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976. **METAMORPHOSES** Page 143.

John Shea. *The Hour of the Unexpected*. Argus Comm. Allen TX 1977. **A PRAYER OF WHOLEHEARTED COMMITMENT**: Page 90.