

Meditations: Sunday of the Second Week of Lent (Year A)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the 2nd week of Lent.

- The desert and the mountains are places of silence
- God divinizes us in prayer
- God's mystery is revealed to us gradually

LAST SUNDAY'S liturgy presented us with Jesus and the devil face to face in the desert. On this second Sunday

of Lent, we move to Mount Tabor to witness the glorious event of our Lord's Transfiguration. If in the desert "we see Jesus fully man, sharing with us even temptation," on Tabor "we contemplate him as the Son of God, who divinizes our humanity."^[1] Nevertheless, despite the contrast, both events anticipate the Paschal Mystery: "Jesus' struggle with the tempter foreshadows the great final duel of the Passion, while the light of his transfigured body anticipates the glory of the Resurrection."^[2]

The desert and the mountain both are secluded places, where solitude reigns. It is to these places that Jesus withdraws, prompted by the Holy Spirit, to pray to the Father. Sacred Scripture shows us that in these spaces, free of noise, God reveals himself in a special way. Hence we all need spaces and times of silence in which, by silencing the noise

around us, we cultivate an inner recollection where we can hear the whisper of God. “Silence can carve out an inner space in our very depths to enable God to dwell there, so that his words will remain within us and love for him will take root in our minds and hearts and inspire our life.”^[3]

It is only natural to feel a certain fear of silence, since it impels us to look within ourselves to discover the truth about our existence. It is also normal to find it difficult at first to lower the level of noise in our life. But when we seek this silence amid the daily hustle and bustle, amid the often hurried comings and goings each day, we are opening a path to God’s presence. For our Lord often waits for our silence in order to reveal Himself.

PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN, upon ascending Mount Tabor, unexpectedly find themselves immersed in Jesus' prayer. They had contemplated the Master's face many times in the past; they had watched Him as He prayed, as He preached the coming of the Kingdom, as He healed the sick. Perhaps they had seen reflected in Christ's face the feelings that filled his heart. But on the summit of Tabor, they see that beloved face in a new light.

Jesus reveals his glory to the three friends: "He was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light" (*Mt 17:2*). So great was the impression made on them by the contemplation of our Lord's glorious face that Peter exclaimed enthusiastically without knowing what he was saying: "It is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here. one for you and

one for Moses and one for Elijah” (*Mt 17:4*). The disciples feel divinized. “Prayer is the raising of the soul to God,”^[4] St. John Damascene says, in an expression included in the Catechism of the Church; it is a space of silence before God, where we go to be filled with Him, to quench our thirst.

The disciples were deeply transformed by what they saw on Mount Tabor. “Prayer will give us the good divinization that is humble and holy,” wrote St. Josemaría, “and we will be able to work in all environments . . . As a reward for our continued and persevering faithfulness to divine things, the Lord will generously shower on us the richness of his gifts. He will divinize us in the good sense.”^[5] Pope Francis said: “Prayer that is detached from life is not healthy. A prayer that alienates us from the concreteness of life becomes spiritualism, or worse,

ritualism. Let us remember that Jesus, after revealing his glory to the disciples on Mount Tabor, did not want to prolong that moment of ecstasy, but instead came down from the mountain with them and resumed the daily journey. Because that experience had to remain in their hearts as the light and strength of their faith; also a light and strength for the days that were soon to come: those of the Passion.”^[6]

AS AT CHRIST’S BAPTISM in the Jordan River, so too on Mount Tabor “the whole Trinity was present: the Father in the voice, the Son in the man, the Spirit in the bright cloud.”^[7] Amazed at what was happening before their eyes, Jesus’ three disciples received a revelation that would require some time for them to grasp: that the one God is, at the

same time, a Trinity of persons. God's mystery is gradually revealed to us in prayer, often with the help of spiritual reading and personal formation. Thus we let the Holy Spirit progressively purify our understanding of God and teach us to approach Him with simplicity and trust. The Holy Spirit will make us "transfigured men and women,"^[8] who let themselves be regenerated, corrected, and consoled.

While Peter was still speaking, "a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe" (*Mt 17:5-6*). The three apostles always retained a vivid memory of this experience. United to Jesus' prayer, we too discover the wonder of listening to Him and realizing that we are God's children. "Prayer is the

living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit . . . The life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him.”^[9] — Mary, who let her heart be molded inwardly by grace, will help us find those times of silence we need to appreciate more deeply that we are God’s children.

^[1] — Benedict XVI, Angelus, 17 February 2008.

^[2] — Ibid.

^[3] — Benedict XVI, Audience, 7 March 2012.

^[4] — Saint John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, 3, 24.

^[5] — Saint Josemaría, *Letters* 2, no. 54.

^[6] — Francis, Audience, 9 June 2021.

^[7] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 45, a. 4, ad 2.

^[8] Saint John Paul II, Homily, 11 March 2001.

^[9] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2565.

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