

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

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Lent.

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

THE LITURGY last Sunday showed us Jesus and the devil confronting one another in the desert. On this Second Sunday of Lent, in contrast, we move to Mount Tabor to be present at our Lord's glorious Transfiguration.

While 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] But 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 are both isolated places, where solitude reigns. Jesus withdrew there, moved by the Holy Spirit, to pray to the Father. Holy Scripture shows us that in those places, free of noise, God reveals himself in a special way. Therefore we all need spaces and times of silence in which, quieting the noise around us, we can foster an interior recollection in which the “whisper” of God’s voice is heard. “Silence can carve out an inner space

in our very depths to enable God to dwell there, so that his Word will remain within us and love for Him will take root in our minds and hearts and inspire our life.”^[3]

It is normal to feel a certain fear of silence, because it requires going deep inside ourselves to discover the truth of our existence. It is also normal that at first it is difficult for us to lower the noise level at those times. But when we look for this quiet space within the daily hustle and bustle, the so often rapid pace of our daily life, we open a path to the presence of God. Our Lord often waits for our silence to reveal Himself.

YOU HAVE SAID, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, Lord, do I seek.” Hide not your face from me

(Ps 27:8-9). With these words of the psalmist, the Church wants to help us prepare our hearts for Easter, encouraging us during Lent to seek Christ's face with greater eagerness. Peter, James and John, as they climb Mount Tabor, find themselves unexpectedly immersed in Jesus' prayer. They had contemplated the Master's face many times in the past; they had looked at Him while He prayed, when He preached the coming of the Kingdom or cured so many sick people. Perhaps they had seen reflected in Christ's face the feelings that filled his heart. But at the top of Tabor they see his beloved face in a new way.

Jesus reveals his glory to those three friends: *And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white (Lk 9:29)*. So great was the impression produced by the contemplation of our Lord's glorious

body that Peter exclaimed, enthused, without knowing what he was saying: *Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah* (Lk 9:33). The disciples felt deified. “Prayer is the raising up of the soul to God,”^[4] Saint John Damascene said, in words quoted by the Catechism of the Church; it is a space of silence before God, where we seek to fill ourselves with Him, to quench our thirst.

The disciples were overwhelmed by what they saw on Tabor. “Prayer will give us the good, humble, holy divinization,” Saint Josemaría wrote. “And we will be able to work in all environments . . . Through this continuous, persevering seeking of the divine, our Lord will give us abundantly the riches of his gifts, the good divinization.”^[5] “At the same time, a prayer that alienates itself 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]

JUST AS had happened during Christ’s Baptism in the Jordan River, so also on Mount Tabor “the whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice, the Son in the man, the Spirit in the luminous cloud.”^[7] Amazed at what is happening before their eyes, Jesus’ three disciples receive a

revelation that will require time for them to assimilate: that the one God is, at the same time, a Trinity of persons. God's mystery is progressively revealed to us in prayer, often prepared with spiritual reading and personal formation. Thus we will pave the way for the Holy Spirit, who is the one who progressively purifies our concept of God and teaches us to approach Him with simplicity and trust. The Holy Spirit will make us "transfigured men and women,"^[8] who have allowed themselves to be regenerated, corrected and consoled.

When Peter finished speaking *a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"* (Lk 9:34-35). The apostles never forgot that experience and those words. United to Jesus' prayer, we too discover the

wonder of listening to Him and coming to realize that we are God's children. "Prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their infinitely good Father, 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 allowed herself to be molded inwardly by grace, can help us find the moments of silence we need to go deeper into the reality 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, c. 45, a. 4, ad 2.

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

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