

## Lent 2A - 2023

### A Mountain of Meaning

A brilliant magician was performing on an ocean liner. But every time he did a trick, the captain's parrot would yell, "It's a trick. He's a phony. That's not magic." Then one evening during a storm, the ship sank while the magician was performing. The parrot and the magician ended up in the same lifeboat. For several days they just glared at each other, neither saying a word to the other. Finally, the parrot said, "OK, I give up. What did you do with the ship?"

The parrot couldn't explain that last trick! It was too much to comprehend, even for a smart parrot. Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Scholars over the years have tried to explain what in the world Peter meant by this suggestion. But I think trying to find meaning to these words is pointless. It's simply the way Matthew explains: Peter was frightened and he just said the first thing that came to into his head. He simply could not comprehend what was happening.

In life, moments occur that are incomprehensible. The birth of one's own child is one of those moments. The loss of a loved one is one of those moments. September 11 was one of those moments. There are mountaintop and valley moments throughout life. We are never ready for them. They arrive unannounced changing us in irreversible ways. But there is one thing they all have in common. They demand that we be silent and listen. These moments have something to say to us, to teach us.

But too often our response is like that of Peter, babbling absurdities because we cannot understand the significant, the meaningful moment. When Peter does finally quit talking nonsense a cloud appears, envelopes them, and the voice of God gives this instruction to Peter, James, and John:

"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!" That's it. Very short. To the point. What Peter said made no sense. What God said had a mountain of meaning.

1. This Is My Son.
2. Whom I love.
3. Listen to Him.

## The Mountain Top

John A. Redhead, Jr. tells of a father and son who have a really good relationship. Among their many good times together, one stood out above all the rest: It was a hike up a particular mountain where they seemed to reach the height of a beautiful friendship. After they returned home, there came a day when things did not seem to run as smoothly. The father rebuked the son, and the son spoke sharply in return.

An hour later, the air had cleared. "Dad," said the son, "whenever it starts to get like that again, let's one of us say 'The Mountain Top.'" So, it was agreed. In a few weeks another misunderstanding occurred. The boy was sent to his room in tears. After a while, the father decided to go up and see the boy. He was still angry until he saw a piece of paper pinned to the door. The boy had penciled three words in large letters: "The Mountain Top."

That symbol was powerful enough to restore the relationship of father and son. (Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Riverside Sermons* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958).) — Come with me to the mountain. It is there that relationships can be made right. Come with me to the mountain. See who Jesus is. See what, by his grace, you and I can yet become.

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### **"Lord, give me the grace for transformation."**

The word transfiguration means a change in form or appearance.

Fr. Anthony De Mello tells the story of such a metamorphosis in the prayer life of an old man. "I was a revolutionary when I was young, and all my prayer to God was: 'Lord, give me the grace to change the world.'

As I approached middle age and realized that half of my life was gone without changing a single soul, I changed my prayer to: 'Lord, give me the grace to change all those who come in contact with me; just my family and friends and I shall be satisfied.'

Now that I am old and my days are numbered, I have begun to see how foolish I have been. My one prayer now is: 'Lord, give me the grace to change myself.' If I had prayed for this right from the start, I should not have wasted my life."

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