

Bible Study

Solemnity of the Transfiguration

Opening Prayer: (Sign of the Cross) “We praise your greatness, O God. Every day you reveal yourself to us, strengthen us for discipleship, and favor us with your loving mercy. Reveal yourself to us again today in the words of Sacred Scripture and in our reflections, so that we might know you better and love you more. For you live and reign, one God in Three Persons, without beginning or end. Amen.”

Focusing Questions

1. When or how did God reveal Himself to you this week?
2. What carries you through difficult times?

Commentary before the First Reading: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

The prophet Daniel received God’s word in several dream-visions. This reading is taken from the account of a dream in which the 4 great empires which would occupy and control the People of God were contrasted with the kingdom of God during a time of peace. “A son of man” was a common expression to refer simply to a human. God was promising, in the end, to give the leadership of his People to one who would be totally unlike the foreign conquerors, a man who would lead God’s people with goodness and extend God’s kingdom to the whole world.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. Which details describing God are unmistakably NOT human?
2. What is a “myriad”?
3. Compare verses 12 and 13 to Revelation 5:13. Point out 3 similarities between these verses and that Revelation verse about Jesus Christ.
4. How would a vision like this one encourage a people who were being occupied and persecuted?

Commentary before the Second Reading: 2 Peter 1:16-19

This letter is probably one of the last books of the Bible to be composed. It was likely written by an anonymous author, proclaiming a message consistent with the teaching of Saint Peter himself; the letter contains several references which date it after the deaths of all 12 Apostles. The main portion of the letter is a response to false teachers who maintained that there will be no Second Coming. The writer encourages readers to hold on to the teachings of Jesus, as passed on faithfully by the Apostles.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. Find 3 references to the Transfiguration in these verses?
2. Does the “we” in verse 19 refer to the entire Church or only to the Apostles or only to the 3 who were present at the Transfiguration?
3. Which words imply that this portion of the letter is a response to a challenge of false teachers?
4. Which words in verse 16 and in verse 19 refer to the Second Coming?
5. There are 3 different, correct ways of looking at the phrase “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What might those be?

Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Matthew 17:1-9

Although Saint Luke placed the account of the Transfiguration in the middle of his Gospel, both Saint Mark’s and Saint Matthew’s Gospels place it slightly before Jesus’ final visit to Jerusalem where he suffered and died. This amazing experience was a gift to the apostles to strengthen them – and the Church – for what lay ahead. Moses represented the Law that guided God’s people in living out the covenant; Elijah is considered the greatest of the prophets, who repeatedly reminded the people of God’s teachings and called them back to faithfulness.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Point out similar expressions in this Gospel reading and in the First Reading.
2. Why would Saint Peter have suggested the erection of 3 tents? (What would that have made possible?)
3. Jesus always acted only in response to the Father’s will. Where in this account do we see evidence that Jesus was not “showing off” his divinity to the apostles, but rather being obedient to the Father even in his glory?

4. Of what were the three apostles afraid? Can you think another word for that kind of fear?
5. What indication is there that the 3 apostles were given this experience to strengthen them during Jesus' passion and death which was very near?
6. At the account of Jesus' baptism, all 3 members of the Blessed Trinity were present in specific ways; do you see that happening again in this account?

Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives

1. Some of the disciples started to doubt that Jesus was the Messiah when they saw him arrested and tortured. Peter, James and John were to use this incident to reassure them during those dark hours. Have you ever wondered if all you've believed about Jesus was a myth? What reminded you of the truth?
2. Why does God permit very difficult things – some seemingly even unfair – to happen to his believers? Can there be any benefit for us in suffering?
3. In which aspect of your life is your loving dependence on God most evident to you – and maybe also those around you?
4. The transfiguration reveals the fullness of life which God wishes to share with all of his disciples for all eternity. How confident are you that you will share in that gift?
5. This feast day is of such great importance that, when it falls on a Sunday, it takes precedence over the Sunday readings. Discuss why the Church would consider this event more important than, say, the raising of Lazarus from the dead or the miracle at the wedding in Cana or the Sermon on the Mount.

Closing Prayer

“Holy and glorious God, although we have never glimpsed your face nor heard your voice, we believe in your desire to have us share in your eternal life. Strengthen our faith through the words of your prophets, both in Sacred Scripture and from prophets of our own time, and help us to follow your law because of our love for you. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who is our Lord. Amen.” (Sign of the Cross)