



Mar. 8, 2020 Mt. 17: 1-9 Gn. 12: 1-4a

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [Transfiguration](#)

.Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Love – Illusion and Reality](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Carl Jung teaches: "Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside awakens". Sometimes we can only appreciate an experience in hindsight after we look inside. The glimpse of what was to come was way beyond the imaginations of the poor disciples. It would only be with the aid of 20X20 vision of the cross, resurrection and Pentecost that they will be able to do what Jesus told them, that is, Get up, don't be afraid. But for now they come down from their "highs" experienced that day, and follow Jesus down the mountain into what lay ahead. We are given this glimpse also as Lent asks us also to follow Jesus as we too embrace the crosses that our lives entail. But we have an advantage of these disciples, we don't have to keep quiet about what we have seen, because Jesus has risen, as we too will rise.

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 **touch**ed 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**."

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 **touch**ed 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: The disciples were told to get up and not be afraid. How does my faith in Jesus enable me to do that?

PRAYER: Transfigured Jesus, I too get glimpses of what God is doing in my life and like the poor disciples of today I rush to make tangible the experience so I can linger and savor the moment. And like those disciples I truly need those glimpses in order to keep on keeping on. I like they look out at all the struggles that surround me and I feel like falling facedown to the ground. Please touch me so that I can do like they- get up unafraid to follow you for another day, another week, another year. 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.

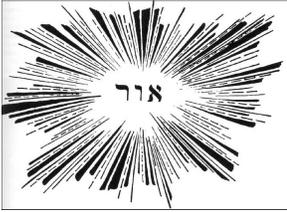
Would you have liked to be one of the disciples? Are you now a disciple?

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 PLEASSED / 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.
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. 18:1-8 // Mk. 9:1-7; Lk. 9: 28-36; Mt. 17: 3 // Mt. 28:2; Mt. 17: 5 // Mt. 3:17; 2 Pt. 1:17; Mt. 17: 9 // Mk. 9: 9f;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Gn. 12: 1-4; [Ps. 33: 4-5](#), 18-22; 2 Tim. 1: 8-10; Mt. 17: 1-9;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

For years, I would begin my classes on the contemplative mind by repeating the same sentence twice: “Most people do not see things as they are because they see things as they are!” Which is not to see at all. Their many self-created filters keep them from seeing with any clear vision. The whole of life is almost perfectly calibrated to get you out of your own way, which is normally achieved by having to give up control or through a persistent sadness, pain, or fear. Richard Rohr

Seeing God in the most intimate moments of our lives is seeing God for others. Henri Nouwen

[In an interesting article on seeing](#) we find: “One general way of considering the distinction between these perception modes is that with the bottom-up we are experiencing the mind as a conduit of sensory experience, whereas in top-down we are additionally a constructor of information. A conduit enables something to flow freely, directing that flow but not changing it much; a constructor is fuelled by input and then generates its own output, a transformation that changes the fuel into another form: it constructs a new layer of representational information beyond the initial sensory stream. The mind can be a bottom-up conduit and top-down constructor.” Daniel J Siegel

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 20011. Pg. 64. To order contact [Carol Oberfoel](#)



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. Pg. 251

Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S.O. [The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies.](#) Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

(16th 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. Basser, 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.



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.

Jesus Christ is a light for human hearts. As light He gives life, sight, and knowledge. As a light for the heart He reveals how to value or determine worth. And again: More importantly, we see that the heart gets its orientation to life from devotion to something for its own sake. That's what devotion is for; it is appreciation of the intrinsic value of something. The wise heart devotes itself for the sake of that which is pervasive, enduring, and deep. One becomes more about that than about self. [Fr. Jonah Wharff](#) 2/2-3/17

"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

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 wondrous 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

Dietrich von Hildebrand has written: "It is not from what we undertake with a view to our transformation, but from the things to which we devote ourselves for their own sake that will issue in the deepest formative effects" upon our character. [

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

A PRAYER OF WHOLEHEARTED COMMITMENT

Lord, / You have the biblical reputation of taking people places they never wanted to go. Witness Jonah / delivered by whale to Nineveh / and Habakkuk / flown by angel to Babylon. / Also I have heard / You do not consult. / Abraham is suddenly ordered from Haran and Moses called out of retirement for the Egypt assignment. Furthermore Paul says / You take a chiropodist's delight / in Achilles heels, / spurn eloquence for the stutter, / and reveal yourself / in the thorns of the flesh. / And what was this unpleasantness / with your Son shortly before / his appointment at the Right Hand? / So it is that to You / my most resounding "yes" is a "maybe" / and it is with one eye on the door that I say / "Behold, Lord, your servant waiteth!"

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

The God-given contemplative mind, on the other hand, recognizes the God Self, the Christ Self, the True Self of abundance and deep inner security. We start with mere seeing; we end up with recognizing. Richard Rohr

Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside awakens. Carl Jung

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014*. Pgs. 69—73. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

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

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2001*. Pgs.62-64.To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)