

The Transfiguration of the Lord (A)
(Daniel 7:9-10.13-14 / Mathew 17:1-9)
06.08.2017

Dear brothers and sisters,

Matthew's presentation of the Transfiguration of the Lord –the version we have just heard- is slightly different to Mark and Luke's presentations. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus appears as **the new Moses**. We remember that Moses met with God on Mount Sinai, and after their meeting, Moses' face shone. We read in the book of Exodus: "As Moses was coming down the mountain, he did not know that the skin of his face was radiant because he had been talking to God" (Ex 34:29). Like Moses, Jesus met with God on a new Sinai: mount Tabor, and there He was transfigured: "his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light".

The Transfiguration took place on a high mountain. In the Bible, **a mountain** is a place of meeting with the Lord, a place where the Lord reveals himself, and where those who encounter Him there listen to his voice and speak with Him. Jesus used to go to the mountain top in the early morning or late at evening to pray to his heavenly Father. There, in the presence of his Father, Jesus found inspiration and strength to pursue his mission. It happened also that Jesus taught his disciples on the mountain: We all know the famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew's gospel chapters 5 to 7). If we want to meet with the Lord in prayer, it is necessary for us to withdraw regularly to a solitary place – our own little mountain – in order to praise, adore and listen to the Lord. This does not mean that we cannot pray in all the circumstances of our lives; indeed we have to do that, for we are called to pray always. But if we want to succeed and persevere in praying always, then we have to take some distance from our daily round of affairs and busyness, on a regular basis, in order to build up our strength and maintain firm foundations for an unceasing relationship with the Lord.

We know that "God used to talk to Moses face to face, as a man talks to his friend" (Ex 33:11). The Lord's desire is to see us setting time apart in order to meet with Him. The Lord's desire is to speak with us as a friend talks to his friend. Jesus is the light of the world. If we turn to Him in prayer, there can be no doubt that He will share his light with us and we shall reflect it in our turn!

When Jesus was **transfigured**, it became obvious for the three witnesses Peter, James and his brother John that He was no ordinary human being, and not just an extraordinary human being. Behind the human appearance of Jesus, they saw God's glory revealed in a unique way. They discovered the true identity of Jesus. They recognized in Jesus the New Moses sent to set God's people free from slavery, shame and death. More than that, they were confirmed that the man Jesus was also the Son of God, God himself. Jesus' transfiguration was a foretaste of his resurrection which cannot be separated from his passion and death. Through the mystery of the Transfiguration, the three witnesses were led to recognize Jesus as the Master of Life, life stronger than death. They were led to recognize Jesus as the one who forgives our sins; the one who reconciles us with the Father, with one another and with ourselves. The glory of God was made visible in and through Jesus. In our ordinary lives, when we take some distance from our busyness in order to pray, the light of the Lord comes upon us: it is given to us to recognize the

presence of the Lord in those we meet and in the events in which we participate. It is given to us to see our fellow human beings and the events of this world as God sees them, to see behind appearances the true meaning and core identity of everything and everyone. It is given to us to recognize the full picture. It is given to us to recognize the Lord's will, to discern what has to be done and what should be said. This is our way of seeing the transfigured Lord.

Paradoxically, if we want to see the glory of the Lord, we have to listen to Him: To listen to the Lord in order to see the Lord. "From the cloud there came a voice which said: "This is my Son, the beloved; he enjoys my favour. **Listen to Him**". Here too, Jesus is presented as the new Moses to whom we have to listen. To listen to the Lord helps us to recognize his presence and his action in our own life and in the lives all around us. To listen is not one commandment among others. It is the great biblical injunction. We find it at the beginning of the prayer which every pious Jew says three times a day: 'Shema Israel... Listen Israel'... Listen is a refrain in the biblical books of wisdom. To listen to Jesus is the solemn invitation received from the Father in the narrative of the Baptism of the Lord. To listen is the first word of Saint Benedict's Rule for monks: "Listen, my son"... To listen is not always easy. We are so busy, so caught up with ourselves. In order to listen, we have to cultivate a certain silence, a certain space within us in order to open ourselves to somebody who is different to us. This is true with all those we meet and to whom we have to listen. This is true before and above all in regard to our encounter with the Lord who is "the all other" par excellence. If we have at heart to listen to the Lord, we shall see his glory and shall reflect it. This is the way Moses followed; this is the way Jesus followed. Let us courageously follow this same way. We shall not be disappointed, far from it.