



March 13, 2022

Second Sunday in Lent

While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. —Luke 9:29



Dear Friends;

Freelance writer Valerie Schultz wrote,

"I once read that the initial builders of Notre Dame in Paris knew that they would not live to see their work completed. What enviable faith! Centuries later, a college student abroad feeling worldly and agnostic, I visited Notre Dame. I'd happened upon a Sunday afternoon organ recital. I knelt, transfixed by the cathedral's ancient incensed majesty. My senses overtaken by the presence of God, by sight and sound so immense and soaring, I found myself crying. I didn't grasp it that day, but what I suspect God knew I needed to be awestruck.

The Transfiguration is for both Jesus and his disciples an experience of altered consciousness. The everyday world opens and reveals the divine shining through our humanity. This was a moment of clarity. Jesus had been preparing his disciples for the reality of his coming death. He also tells them that they too will have to have a share in his cross. Nothing beautiful is born without a struggle.

The disciples Peter, James and John are often confused and don't understand what Jesus is telling them. Even in this moment of being fully awake they do not know what to say or do. In the end they end up falling silent before a mystery that they cannot put into words. Maybe in our confusion we need Jesus to take us up on the mountain. We need to see the dazzling face of someone we thought we knew. We need to hear a commanding voice that surrounds us and invites us to trust.

This week, we have had several Synod listening sessions with our youth, parents, and many others. One of the things that kept coming up is that the young seem to be abandoning religion. As I was listening, I kept thinking of the surveys of young people that said they feel that Christianity is about rules. I responded to the groups by saying our faith is not about rules. It is meant to point us to the experience of God. If we do not have that experience Church becomes an empty bureaucracy.

The only way we can be opened to the experience of the divine is through profound love, great suffering, or an intense experience of beauty. If we do not have an intimate sense of God in our lives our children will not be drawn to faith. They will just see it as a set of rules. We are invited to a relationship not to rules.

Centering prayer is a practice that can help us be open to God's presence. St Teresa of Avila was a mystic. A mystic is someone who constantly is aware of the divine presence. I want to end today with a centering exercise. Coming out of silence we will chant the words of St Teresa,

*Nothing should ever trouble or haunt thee,
One who has God is never left wanting.
Nothing should ever trouble or haunt thee,
God is all one needs.*

Peace,

Fr Ron

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