

6 August 2017 (Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, Year A)

Daniel 7:9-10,13-14; Psalm 96(97):1-2,5-6,9; 2Peter 1:16-19; Matthew 17:1-9.

Listen to him!

Today we stop the sequence of readings from the gospel according to Matthew to focus on the episode of the Transfiguration of Jesus, celebrated annually on the 6th of August.

In the past few Sundays we have been reflecting on the parables of the kingdom in chapter 13 of Matthew's gospel narrative. One theme that came out strongly in these parables was the need for us to listen to the word of God and to let it take over our whole life. As we read the gospel narrative given to us for today's celebration we are invited to ask ourselves 'who is this Jesus we have chosen to follow?' and 'how do I live my life as a disciple of Jesus?'

The narrative that we have read from Matthew's gospel today is highly allegorical. Various images from the Old Testament are included in order to inform us about who Jesus really is. In the passages immediately preceding today's gospel passage, Jesus asked the disciples who they thought he was. Peter, in the name of the whole group, declared him to be the messiah, the Son of the living God (Mt 16:16). Immediately after that Jesus announced to his disciples that he was going to suffer, die and be raised again (Mt 16:21). Peter could not accept this and tried to stop Jesus from speaking this nonsense. These episodes make us wonder what the disciples really understood about Jesus.

In today's gospel we are told that six days later Jesus took three of his disciples with him on a high mountain and there is transfigured. The high mountain, the shining face and white clothes are all symbols of Jesus' inner glory as Son of God. In this 'vision' the disciples are allowed to see past the human Jesus into his divine being. He was also seen speaking with Moses and Elijah, two main figures in from the Old Testament, representing the whole of the Old Testament – the Law and the Prophets. Moses and Elijah themselves had a deep experience of God and were assumed into heaven. But if all this symbolism is not enough, the bright cloud of the presence of God overshadowed the whole scene and God's voice was once again heard, declaring Jesus to be his Son, the beloved.

The Jesus I choose to follow, the Jesus I have committed my life to through my Baptism is not a mere prophet or a holy person, but God himself. In and through Jesus I get to see and speak with God himself. I have never experienced anything in any way close to this experience of the three apostles, but through their witness I believe in Jesus who is fully human like myself, and fully divine, the beloved Son of God.

What does it mean for me to be a disciple of Jesus? How do I follow Jesus today? The voice of God invites me to listen to Jesus.

When I listen to what someone tells me, I carefully take in the words that are being spoken and do my best to carry out what I am being told to do. In a way I give myself over to the person who is speaking to me. In the parables we reflected upon in the past few Sundays, the kingdom of God - God's presence among us - was compared to yeast mixed with three measures of flour and with mustard seed that became a big shrub. Like the yeast and the shrub, I need to let God's word to take over every space in my life; I do my best to turn over each aspect of my life to God. The apostle Paul expresses this concept by saying: 'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' (Gal 2:20)

The first step in the journey of discipleship is to listen and reflect on the word of God, in creation, in my sisters and brothers and in scripture and be open to the newness that the word of God creates in me.

Listen to him!

Fr Mario