

Encountering the Spirit

Week 2: Mountain Top

Opening prayer

O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
R. Amen.

(Collect for Second Sunday of Lent)

Review

Is there anything you would like to share about the previous week?



In this Synod, we too are called to become experts in the art of encounter by taking time to encounter the Lord and one another, to listen to what the Spirit wants to say to the Church

*Pope Francis,
October 2021*

Scripture

Luke 9:28-36 The Transfiguration

As Jesus prayed, the aspect of his face changed.

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning.

Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' – He did not know what he was saying.

As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.' And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.



Synodal Pathway

Pope Francis has affirmed that: "A synodal Church is a Church which listens... The faithful People, the College of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other; and all listening to the Holy Spirit."



Reflection

All of us, irrespective of our specific vocation, are called to the intimacy of companionship with Jesus and to growth in the Spirit. Do we find these words comforting or challenging, knowing that Jesus encounters us where we are and as we are? Again, where do we sense the Spirit is active in our life? One benefit of spending time in the desert is that we can let go of false images of self and re-encounter the person we were always intended to be. The image of Lent as time spent in the desert is helpful, as naturalists will tell us that, far from being a barren place, the desert is filled with life, wonder and encounter. Being attentive to our landscape matters.

As we travel up the mountain as onlookers to witness the Transfiguration, with Peter, John and James, what do we notice? This is a profoundly special moment, just before the most trying time of Jesus' ministry. It is a time of blessing for Jesus, giving him the support and grace he will need for the difficult days ahead. From this moment on his steps turn to Jerusalem, where he will be treated as a criminal, humiliated, led to Calvary and executed.

Imagine how the three apostles felt as they climbed with Jesus. Just before this, Jesus had prophesied His Passion, sharing that He was to suffer, be rejected, put to death and to rise again. Their image of the Messiah had been turned on its head, dreams shattered with a sense of anguish creeping in. We, too, often fall into the temptation of creating Jesus in our own image rather than configuring ourselves to the authentic image that He reveals, our daily concerns sometimes stopping us from noticing this. In reflecting on the Apostles' concerns, Pope Francis said, 'His face radiant and his garments glistening, providing a preview of His image as the Risen One, offer to those frightened men the light to pass through the shadows'. (Angelus, February 2021) On our Lenten journey we need to experience oasis moments, where we can off-load our worries and be refreshed by the Spirit. Only then can we step out onto

paths that at times seem difficult and challenging. Our journey is illuminated by the light of the resurrection, thereby helping us to find and remain on the path. Again, at an oasis we encounter fellow travellers where we feed and listen.

In life our final destination, as the Synodal pathway alludes to, is beyond the horizon, so it is the journey that is our focus. If we learn to listen to each other, we will be better able to listen to the Holy Spirit prompting us. Have you noticed the difference it makes to a journey when we look out to enjoy the scenery, or engage with a fellow traveller? When we do so, the journey becomes just as important as the arrival point, and has the capacity to reshape the onward travel. Think of journeys where a seemingly chance conversation with a stranger became a grace-filled moment, one of nurturing and of being nurtured. In our Lent expedition what might the Holy Spirit want us to notice and where are we being nudged to go, both personally and as the People of God?

In life and work we tend to get overly focused, albeit understandably, on the end point, ready to move on to what is next. Yet the pilgrim, as with the Synodal Pathway, learns more by noticing what happens on the way, as we walk through history with the Lord. In his homily for the Opening of the Synodal Path in October 2021, Pope Francis said "Let us have a good journey together," and in his conclusion, expressed the hope that we might be "pilgrims in love with the Gospel and open to the surprises of the Spirit." He urged us not to miss out "on the grace-filled opportunities born of encounter, listening, and discernment".

In the trials of our pilgrimage, it is good to recall our 'God-moments', which give us the courage to face the difficulties on the way and recognise our little 'transfiguration' moments. For now, though, may we, like Peter, say, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here!"

by Deacon Roger Carr-Jones

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus
I give you my hands to do your work
I give you my feet to go your way
I give you my eyes to see as you do
I give you my tongue to speak your words
I give you my mind that you may think in me
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me
Above all, I give you my heart
that you may love in me
your Father and all mankind
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me
so that it is you Lord Jesus
who live and work and pray in me. Amen
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QUESTION

What has spoken to you today in the scripture and reflection? Where have you experienced either an oasis moment, being really listened to, or had an unexpected conversation that has reshaped your journey?

POINT FOR ACTION

Discerning as a group, from everything you have shared in this time together, what steps is the Spirit inviting us to take as we 'journey together' in our parish, or community and the wider church?