

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent Year “C”

March 12-13, 2022

Readings: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Phil 3:17-4:1; Luke 9: 28-36

We are blessed with three accounts of the Transfiguration, from the gospels of Sts. Matthew, Mark and Luke. However, they are not identical, each written under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit. For example, Peter addresses Jesus by a different title in each account: Matthew calls Jesus as “Lord,” Mark calls him Rabbi, and Luke uses yet another word, meaning “superintendent or overseer,” rendered here as Master.<sup>1</sup>

Since none of the evangelists was there—these variations are neither surprising, nor troubling. It’s fascinating to line them up side by side. Extra details paint a fuller picture. Luke is alone in that Moses, Elijah and Jesus were speaking “of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.” St. Luke includes the detail of Peter, James and John being heavy with sleep, perhaps explaining why they were so startled by it all.

Luke’s account alone notes that Moses and Elijah “were about to part from him.” So, Peter suggests erecting the tents. I suspect he did this to keep them around— after all, who wouldn’t want to converse with Moses and Elijah? But the biggest difference of all concerns the cloud that overshadowed them. Luke alone states that the three men actually **entered** the cloud and became frightened. Peter’s demeanor rapidly changed from excited host to being frightened. What happened?

When I first began logging my frequent flyer miles, I would request a window seat, so that I could gaze out. Long before individual video screens, I’d gaze down— wondering whether I was passing over Muskegon or Grand Rapids, MI? At other times, I drew upon my 6<sup>th</sup> grade science class, and our unit on **Meteorology**. I’d try to identify the clouds— cirrus, cumulus, cumulonimbus, amazed at their shapes and majestic sizes! But alas, those days are long gone— I want the aisle seat now!

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<sup>1</sup> Kurios, Rabbi and *epistátēs*— Lord, Rabbi and Master (overseer) respectively.

Only on rare occasions have I experienced **moderate turbulence**, once in a way that was a bit startling. Those tall fluffy white clouds packed a powerful punch. Pilots are taught: “Avoid cumulus clouds or at the very least, be prepared for turbulence when flying through them. You may know the routine with the fasten seatbelt chime!

However, in our spiritual life, it is nearly impossible to avoid turbulence. We can try to recognize it ahead of time and prepare for it, but just as pilots are fooled even with the best of navigational instruments, we cannot always know when it is coming, or mistake it for something else.

While both Matthew and Mark mention the cloud that overshadowed them, their focus was on the words coming forth from it. Instead of holding on to the figures of old, the heavenly voice charges the disciples to listen to Jesus. Peter was misunderstanding the nature of this visit from the past. Luke even relates that Peter “did not know what he was saying.”

Focus on the now, not on the figures from the past. Listen to Jesus. Do not be paralyzed in fear- listen to Him! For us here today, there is a great lesson in the Transfiguration. Situated on the Second Sunday of Lent, the story serves as a reminder of the sufferings Jesus must endure before the glory of his resurrection.

We share in the glory of Christ by sharing in both his suffering and triumph through our works of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. If you are starting to notice how difficult it is to persevere in your mortifications of Lent, take heart. Be courageous. This is nothing other than spiritual turbulence. Fasten around your waist the seat belt of charity and virtue.

Dig in- challenge yourself to greater holiness this season. Do not shrink from the challenge; rather, enter right into the center of the cloud and embrace it. Do not fear. In all three of its versions, the Transfiguration is rich fare for our Lenten meditation. Let us take to heart both its lessons and its promises.