

PSYCHOLOGIST ABRAHAM MASLOW TELLS THIS STORY OF A YOUNG MOTHER. ONE MORNING SHE WAS GETTING BREAKFAST FOR HER FAMILY. THE KITCHEN WAS FILLED WITH SUNLIGHT, HER CHILDREN WERE LAUGHING AND TALKING, AND HER HUSBAND WAS PLAYING WITH THE LITTLEST CHILD.

AS SHE SCURRIED ABOUT SPREADING JAM ON TOAST AND POURING ORANGE JUICE, SHE WAS SUDDENLY OVERWHELMED WITH JOY AND LOVE FOR HER FAMILY. TEARS FILLED HER EYES AND SHE BECAME SO CHOKED UP THAT SHE COULD HARDLY SPEAK.

MASLOW CALLS SUCH A MOMENT AS THIS A PEAK MOMENT. IT IS A MOMENT WHEN FOR A FEW PRECIOUS SECONDS OR MINUTES WE SEE AN ORDINARY EVENT IN AN EXTRAORDINARY WAY. IT IS A MOMENT WHEN GOD SEEMS TO SHINE THROUGH THE THINGS AROUND US AND WE GLIMPSE ANOTHER WORLD BEYOND THIS ONE.

ANOTHER NAME THAT WE AS CHRISTIANS USE FOR THESE MOMENTS IS GRACED MOMENTS...MOMENTS WHEN WE FEEL GOD'S PRESENCE IN HIS CREATION IN A SPECIAL WAY.

THE IDEA OF A PEAK MOMENT HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE DISCIPLES PETER, JAMES AND JOHN EXPERIENCED IN TODAY'S GOSPEL. FOR A FEW PRECIOUS MOMENTS THEY SAW JESUS IN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT WAY...THEY SAW GOD SHINE THROUGH THE EXTERNAL PERSON OF JESUS.

FOR A FEW PRECIOUS MINUTES THEY GOT A GLIMPSE OF A WORLD BEYOND THIS ONE...FOR A FEW PRECIOUS MINUTES, THEY SAW FROM THE OUTSIDE OF JESUS WHAT HE WAS ON THE INSIDE: THE GLORIOUS, BEAUTIFUL SON OF GOD.

FOR US AS CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS THE EUCHARIST IS SUCH A MOMENT IN OUR WEEK. IT IS AN EXPERIENCE THAT WE OWE IT TO OURSELVES TO UNDERSTAND

AND FEEL DEEPLY. THE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT IS THE CENTRE OF OUR LIFE AS A PARISH AND AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. PERSONAL AND SHARED REFLECTION ON THIS GRACED MOMENT OF OUR FAITH LIVES IS VITAL AND A FITTING PART OF OUR LENTEN PREPARATION FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EASTER MYSTERY, THAT THE RISEN CHRIST IS AMONG US AS A COMMUNITY AND THAT HE IS OUR PERSONAL SAVIOUR.

THERE IS A QUESTION THAT NEEDS TO BE ASKED ABOUT TODAY'S GOSPEL THAT WILL ALSO HELP US TO PREPARE. WHY IS THE GOSPEL STORY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS PLACED AMONG THE SOMBER READINGS OF THE SEASON OF LENT? WHY ISN'T IT PLACED AMONG THE GLORIOUS READINGS OF THE SEASON OF EASTER OR SIMPLY RESERVED FOR THE FEAST DAY WE CELEBRATE ON AUGUST 6TH?

THE ANSWER TO THESE QUESTIONS LIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STORY, IN THE EVENTS WHICH SURROUND IT. THE TRANSFIGURATION TAKES PLACE RIGHT AFTER JESUS TELLS HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE MUST GO TO JERUSALEM TO SUFFER AND DIE.

WHEN PETER HEARD JESUS SAY THIS HE CRIED OUT, "GOD FORBID, LORD! NO SUCH THING SHALL EVER HAPPEN TO YOU."

JESUS THEN SAID TO PETER:

GET BEHIND ME SATAN! YOU ARE AN OBSTACLE TO ME. YOU ARE THINKING NOT AS GOD DOES BUT AS HUMAN BEINGS DO."

PETER, JAMES AND JOHN NEEDED A SPIRITUAL MOMENT TO STRENGTHEN THEM AFTER JESUS' SHOCKING REVELATION.

PERHAPS THAT'S ALSO WHY THE CHURCH PUTS THE TRANSFIGURATION AMONG THE SOMBER READINGS OF LENT. THE CHURCH WANTS TO GIVE US THAT KIND OF GRACED MOMENT TOO, BEFORE IT TURNS OUR ATTENTION TO THE SUFFERING OF JESUS ON GOOD FRIDAY. IT GIVES US SOMETHING TO HOLD ON TO - A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY - DURING THE PAINFUL HOURS WHEN WE RELIVE JESUS' SUFFERING AND DEATH ON THE CROSS.

BUT THERE'S ANOTHER REASON WHY THE TRANSFIGURATION IS PLACED AMONG THE LENTEN READINGS. IT IS BECAUSE THE TRANSFIGURATION IS SO CLOSELY RELATED TO THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

BOTH OF THESE EVENTS TOOK PLACE ON A MOUNTAIN. THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN TOOK PLACE ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES...THE TRANSFIGURATION ON MOUNT TABOR. BOTH EVENTS TOOK PLACE AT THE SAME TIME, AT NIGHT. AND IN BOTH EVENTS THE APOSTLES FELL ASLEEP WHILE JESUS REMAINED AWAKE... PRAYING. FINALLY, BOTH EVENTS WERE WITNESSED BY THE SAME THREE APOSTLES: PETER, JAMES AND JOHN.

AND THIS BRINGS US TO THE CONNECTION. ON MOUNT TABOR THE THREE APOSTLES SAW JESUS IN A MOMENT OF ECSTASY, WHEN HIS DIVINITY SHONE THROUGH HIM IN A WAY THAT IT NEVER HAD BEFORE. ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, ON THE OTHER HAND THE SAME THREE APOSTLES SAW JESUS IN A MOMENT OF AGONY, WHEN HIS HUMANITY SHONE THROUGH HIM IN A WAY THAT IT HAD NEVER DONE BEFORE.

JESUS ECSTASY ON MOUNT TABOR AND HIS AGONY ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES ARE COMPLEMENTARY...THEY ARE INSEPARABLE SIDES OF THE SAME COIN. THEY SHOW US OUR LORD: HIS HUMANITY AND HIS DIVINITY. AND THIS IS THEIR IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR US.

LIKE JESUS WE ALSO HAVE A TWO-FOLD DIMENSION. IN EACH OF US HUMAN BEINGS THERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S DIVINE.

WE ALSO EXPERIENCE MOMENTS OF ECSTASY AND TIMES OF PAIN...TIMES WHEN THE SPARK OF GOD IN US FLICKERS AND ALMOST DIES. IN TIMES OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL PAIN WE CAN FEEL SO FAR AWAY FROM GOD THAT OUR PAIN BECOMES THE FOCUS OF OUR EXISTENCE.

WHEN OUR MOMENTS OF ECSTASY AND AGONY OCCUR, WE SHOULD RECALL

THESE TWO MOUNTAIN EVENTS...WE SHOULD RECALL THAT JESUS EXPERIENCED HIGHS AND LOWS DURING HIS LIFETIME.

WE SHOULD RECALL SOMETHING ELSE...DURING BOTH EVENTS - HIS AGONY AND HIS ECSTASY - JESUS PRAYED.

AND THAT IS THE WAY WE SHOULD RESPOND AS WELL. IF WE DO THEN, LIKE OUR LORD DURING HIS TRANSFIGURATION, WE TOO WILL HEAR GOD SAY TO US WHAT THE FATHER SAID TO JESUS...THIS IS MY BELOVED CHILD.

AND LIKE JESUS DURING HIS AGONY WE TOO WILL EXPERIENCE WHAT HE EXPERIENCED IN THE GARDEN - THE FATHER'S HEALING PRESENCE WHEN WE PRAY, FATHER THY WILL BE DONE.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST SHOULD BE A SOURCE OF HOPE AND CONSOLATION FOR ALL OF US.

MAYBE THAT IS WHY THE EXPERIENCE OF THAT YOUNG MOTHER WAS SO POWERFUL ON THAT MORNING. SHE TRULY LIVED GOD'S LOVE IN AN EVERY DAY MOMENT AND RECOGNIZED GOD'S PRESENCE, GOD'S GRACE, FILLING HER HEART WITH JOY. CERTAINLY, THAT SHOULD BE OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THIS SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST, THIS SACRAMENT OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US.