

# Coming down from the Mountain

In today's Gospel, Matthew's account of Jesus' Transfiguration, we see another challenge to complacency. Jesus has invited Peter, James and John to pray with him on the mountain, where, before their very eyes, he is revealed in his heavenly glory

Peter's reaction? Classic Peter the Impetuous. "Lord, let us build tents here for you, Moses and Elijah."

Here's this burly fisherman, the pope-in-training, having followed Jesus for three years, having just days earlier heard Jesus' less-than-cheery "take up your cross and follow me" prediction of his own death, still thinking that setting up a retirement villa on Mt. Tabor for Jesus and his favorite celebrities (dead ones will do) is what Jesus was all about.

How could Peter be so dense?

Easy!

Isn't that what we all do—listen to the part of the plan that matches our hope for the plan? Don't we want to hear the neat stuff (the glory, the rewards, the golden parachute) and forget about the blood, sweat, tears, the failures, the struggles that make it possible?

It's not that Jesus didn't want the Transfiguration experience for himself or his disciples— heck, he invited them up to the mountain. It was a good thing for them all to recharge their batteries, reconfirm their mission, reestablish their connection with the patriarchs and matriarchs that guide them. It wasn't the being there that was the problem, it was Peter's insistence on staying there that shows he missed the boat.

## Let's Transfigure this thing out

Throughout the Gospel, Jesus shows himself as quite capable of retreat, introspection, mantric ecstasy. But, he never stays in that safe, secluded place that place of sheltered comfort where we so like to stay. He doesn't stay because he knows that true comfort comes not from transcending the human experience, but from embracing it.

Through Peter's petulance, Luke reminds us that as much as Jesus calls us to the interior, to the visionary, to the beatific, he calls us as well to the practical. The mundane, the tangible, the difficult. We need the glory, the ecstasy, the sense of safety and comfort, but we can not live there.

We are actually at our best when the vision fuels us, not when it lulls us to sleep.

So, let's not be too hard on Peter. Maybe in this reading and so many others he doesn't get it right off the bat, but his heart is in the right place. Like us, he's excited about what Jesus has to say, but he tends to hear more clearly what is consoling, and less clearly what is challenging.

Perhaps this balance of consolation and challenge, retreat and action, is why Lent can work so well for us as a season for figuring out how we can come down from the mountain of the comfortable theory and wrestle with the tough issues of life that meet us on the plains of the real.

So, our music this week speaks to our need for the comfort of God's mercy ("Hold Us in Your Mercy") the challenge of God's call to do justice in the world, ("Now We Remain"), the invitation to understand and embrace God's Plan for us, ("Hosea, Come Back to Me") and the joyful celebration of God's creation, the "Canticle of the Sun."