

L'Arche is an international movement concerned with the care of people with intellectual and physical disabilities. Jean Vanier, who is the founder of L'Arche, tells the following story. In one of the L'Arche communities, there is a man called Pierre who has a mental handicap. One day somebody asks Pierre, "*Do you like praying?*"

"Yes," he answers. "And what do you do when you pray?" the questioner asked. "I listen." Pierre answers. "And what does God say to you?" "He says, "*Pierre, you are my beloved son.*" This is what we too should hear we pray and listen to God: "you are my beloved son . . . you are my beloved daughter."

Today's Gospel, the Transfiguration, comes at an important moment in Jesus' life. Jesus is struggling with all the misunderstanding and hatred closing in around Him. The religious leaders are opposing Him, the synagogues are refusing Him, and the towns are so hostile that He has taken to preaching in the wilderness because His life is in danger. Jesus is also struggling with the decision about taking the road to Jerusalem, the place of His death.

At this critical moment of His life, Jesus goes up Mount Tabor to pray and to seek the guidance of His Father. Jesus takes Peter, James and John with Him. It is a rough trip going up the mountain of the Transfiguration. Their journey begins "after six days" when Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. After naming Peter as His successor for His new Church, Jesus explains that He is going to have to suffer and die and then "on the third day be raised." For six days, the Apostles carry this news of Jesus' impending death around inside of them.

On the seventh day on the mountaintop, the Apostles see the glory of Jesus revealed. While Jesus is praying, His face is bathed in light and He becomes transfigured. Then at His side appear Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the prophet. Only Luke's Gospel tells us what is shared in the communication between Jesus, Moses and Elijah. "They were speaking of His departure, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem."

The Greek word which St. Luke uses for Jesus' "departure" is *exodus*, a word which reminds His hearers of the great journey of the Jewish people out of Egypt to

liberation after 400 years of slavery. Jesus' journey to His death and resurrection will be a new Exodus, a new liberation for the people, a new liberation from the slavery of sin.

Moses and Elijah testify that Jesus will fulfill both the Law and the prophecies of the prophets found in the Old Testament. Deep in conversation with them, Jesus is made aware of the full extent of His suffering and death. It is only through Jesus' passion and death on the cross that He will come to the glory of His Resurrection.

Awestruck, Peter wants to build three tents, one each for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. But the Apostles hear the voice of God the Father say, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!" After God has spoken, the vision of Jesus' Transfiguration passes and the moment of insight into Christ's real nature is over.

The Transfiguration is a stunning moment of light that not only surrounds Jesus but radiates from within Him. He Himself is transfigured. For a brief moment, Peter, James and John saw the deep truth about Christ. It is like water bursting a dam as the divinity of Christ burst through Christ's humanity. What the prophet Daniel saw in a vision in today's first reading, the Apostles saw with their own eyes. It is a real mountaintop experience.

Until now, the Apostles saw Jesus as leader, teacher and healer. Here on the mountain they experienced the divinity of Christ, *that He is God and man*. Jesus has a human nature and a divine nature. It is very easy for us to lose the balance between the two.

It is possible to so emphasize the divinity of Christ that we forget that His human nature is real. Jesus is not pretending to be human. His humanity is not a disguise that He removed after the Ascension. He has emotions. He suffers, feels hunger, experiences rejection and betrayal. The other extreme is to so emphasize Christ's humanity that we forget that He is the Second Person of the Trinity Who spoke in parables and gave us His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist. Jesus is more than an extraordinary prophet and holy man. *He is God*.

We need to be reminded of Christ's humanity. At other times, as in this moment on Mount Tabor, we need to be reminded of Jesus' divinity. The Jesus we know from reading the Gospels is really the One Who, in Daniel's revelation, receives dominion, glory and power. Both humanity and divinity are the *truth* about Jesus.

The Transfiguration is something Jesus wanted to happen. It is not as though His divinity is out of control. Jesus wants this moment to be remembered by the Apostles to prepare them for His suffering and death and rising from the dead.

Sunday is our time on the mountain when we can share in God's mystery and experience our own transformation here at Mass. The Mass is the very heart of our Sunday. Just as the heart pumps life into the rest of the body, so the Mass pumps Christ's life into the Church and into our life. Being at Mass is our way of standing with the Apostles on Mount Tabor. We hear in faith the words of the Father, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him." We become more aware and see in faith the glory of God's Son.

The Mass is a time when we come closer to our Lord, when we come to hear His truth spoken in Word and Sacrament and apply it to our lives. It is our time to come and partake of His Holy Eucharist or receive a blessing, to experience the presence of the living Christ within us. It is our time to come and join our prayer to His sacrifice, to come and grasp the bigger picture of His Resurrection and to see our lives in the light of Jesus' death and Resurrection.

We come to Mass to profess in the Creed the truths of our Catholic faith that bind us together as brothers and sisters in Christ. We come to Mass because it is here where we to recall that in everything we do, we are called to be disciples of Jesus and to know something of God's light, and then to go out and convey that light to a dark world. Like Jesus on Mount Tabor, here at Mass we are experiencing the glory of the life awaiting us in heaven.

Let us pray that we will be open to the transformations in our lives that our God is inviting us to experience during the Mass. Let us pray also that we may find the courage to free ourselves of the sin that keeps us away from that perfect friendship we want with God, and that God wants to have with us. Mass gives us the ideal time to seek this desired transformation.

The more we open ourselves to being transformed by Jesus, the more He will work in and through us as instruments of His love to bring healing and peace to our broken world. Take time each and every day to listen to God and you will find the graces for your transformation and the path to even greater faith and blessing.