



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend, instead of having the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration. This grace was given to strengthen Jesus in His humanity in preparation for His Passion and the Cross. But it was not just for Jesus – it was for Peter, James and John. Almighty God shows these three Apostles, without a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus is the Son of God – while human, also divine. While this truth may have made them be overly confident that nothing could happen to Jesus, it also helped them deal with the consequences of His arrest and crucifixion. Jesus' Transfiguration shows that He is God, and so can help them trust even through the darkness of not understanding.

But the Transfiguration was not just to strengthen Jesus and the Apostles – it was meant for us, too. What does the voice of God say? **“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him”** (Matthew 17:5, emphasis added). This event was meant for us to know that we need to listen to Jesus as we struggle with our lives. And what are the first words Jesus says after the Father speaks? **“Rise, and do not be afraid”** (Matthew 17: 7). Jesus tells us not to be afraid. Over and over again, we hear this in Scripture, yet, I'm not sure that we believe it. We do not have to be afraid!

Psalm 136 is an incredible Psalm that speaks of God's work in the history of Israel, and is interspersed at every line with “for his mercy endures forever” (NABRE). Another translation is “for his *love* endures forever.” That word translated as “mercy” or “love” is *hesed*. While hard to translate into English, it means zeal for covenant fidelity. This means God is zealous (not just passive) for fidelity to His covenant with you and me. This covenant, made in the Blood of Jesus, is the promise of eternal life, the promise of forgiveness, the promise that God is going to be faithful to you and me. And how long will He be faithful? “His *hesed* endures forever.”

This is why we don't need to be afraid! God is faithful to His covenant with you and with me... forever. And He is not just faithful to it; He is zealous in His faithfulness!

I think about the other nine apostles as well – what were they doing while Peter, James and John were on the mountain? They were at the bottom of the mountain trying to drive a demon out – with no success. When Jesus comes down and drives out the demon, they ask why they had been unsuccessful. Jesus replies, **“Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you”** (Matthew 17:20). I imagine the disciples attempting to drive out the demon on their own, by their own power. I wonder... if they had looked up the mountain, would they not have seen Jesus shining in His glory (even from a great distance)? Would they not have had the faith they needed? Yet they kept focused on themselves and the problem at hand.

Jesus invites us to look up to Him when we're in the midst of trouble and trials. Too often, we keep looking only at the trouble, and Jesus says, “Look up to Me. I will take care of it. Trust Me: I am God. Do not be afraid!” May we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who drives out our fear!