

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent  
February 28, 2010  
Fr. Tom Elliott

## Becoming Fully Awake

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

Psalm 27

Philippians 3:20—4:1

Luke 9:28b-36

Have you ever fallen asleep through something really important? Other than my homily...?! We sometimes sleep through some unbelievably important things in life. I remember in college I slept through the fire alarm in our dorm hall. I also remember one of our pilgrims on last year's trip to Italy falling asleep during an ordination at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Neither of these, however, compare to what Peter, James, and John have slept through!

In our Gospel reading today, we heard about three of the Apostles being asleep at the Transfiguration of Christ, much like they would be again at the Garden of Gethsemane. There are a number of important parallels between the story of the Transfiguration and the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. For example, Jesus invites only Peter, James and John to be witnesses of both of those events. Also, both events are focused on Christ's upcoming suffering and death in Jerusalem. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus talked to the Father about His approaching suffering and death and humbly asked that the cup pass from Him, but that, more than anything else, He desired to do the Father's will. On the mountain of the Transfiguration, Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about His coming passion and death. We read, "And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and *spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:30-31, *emphasis mine*).

Another important parallel between the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane and the one at the Transfiguration is that the three Apostles fell asleep. In the Garden, Jesus had to keep waking up Peter, James and John. At the Transfiguration, it was the glory of Christ, Moses and Elijah that seemed to wake them up. We are told that, "*Becoming fully awake, they saw [Christ's] glory and the two men standing with him*" (Luke 9:32b, *emphasis mine*).<sup>1</sup> This is a very important line in the story. It is meant to tell us about more than just three men waking up from bodily rest. Their sleep represents their lack of understanding about what Jesus was going to endure in Jerusalem.

William Barclay, in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, mentions the importance of the Apostles "becoming fully awake." He explains that, "In life, we miss so much because our minds are asleep" and that, "there are certain things which are liable to keep our minds asleep."<sup>2</sup> Barclay mentions that our minds can be kept from being "fully awake" to Christ's glory through such things as— an avoidance of change, prejudice, and laziness in examining our lives.

These three things are all things that we either explicitly or implicitly looked at last week in the homily. We looked at the changes that are going on in our Diocese and in our parish and how those changes can stir up a lot of emotions in us. We looked at some of the spontaneous judgments that we can make when those emotions get stirred up in us. And, we reviewed one particular tool that St. Ignatius of Loyola used in order to constantly examine life in order to know how God was transforming him more and more into the image and likeness of Christ (the Examen of Consciousness).

Peter, James and John became "fully awake" presumably because of the glory that shone around them. What are the things that waken *us* from our slumber of avoidance, prejudice, and

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<sup>1</sup> Another reference to the Transfiguration can be found in 2 Peter 1:17-18

<sup>2</sup> William Barclay. The Daily Study Bible Series, The Gospel of Luke, revised edition. Westminster John Knox Press, 1975.

mental lethargy? Sometimes, it's the glory of God. In other words, we sometimes experience the presence and love of God in a way that fills us with wonder and awe and moves us beyond the miry situations we get stuck in.

At other times, suffering and sorrow are the things that God uses to "wake us up." There are very few things that can be as spiritually beneficial to us as suffering and sorrow. They truly invite us to walk a new spiritual depth. They lead us out of self-reliance, independence, and pride and awaken within us trust, dependence on God, and humility. In the last few weeks, I've had three people contact me because they were experiencing what they thought might be a demonic attack. In all three situations, it was very easy to see how God was using the situation to lead the person to faith, baptism, and regular church attendance. God was using the suffering they were experiencing as an invitation out of individualism and into humility, faith and community.

Love is another thing that can spiritually awaken us. The English poet, Robert Browning, told the story of two people falling in love. He explained how the man looked at the woman he loved and she looked at him and "suddenly life awoke." This is what happens inside of us when we experience love—we wake up; we see and understand things in a new way.

An important part of the spiritual journey of Lent is our "becoming fully awake." This week, we have a wonderful opportunity to reflect on what things in our lives make us spiritually sleepy and what methods God is using to try to wake us up.

### **SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:**

- ✚ Take some time in prayer to discern what it is right now in your life that is most strongly "waking you up" spiritually. If it is—
  - The presence, love, or glory of God, then spend some time meditating on Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18 or Luke 9:28b-36
  - Suffering or sorrow, then spend some time meditating on Romans 5:3-5
  - Love, then spend some time meditating on 1 Corinthians 13:4-13