

Many of us have had them, those times when we felt like we were on top of the world, really happy, confident that we knew all the answers, could solve any problem that came up. Or we felt that we were really close to God, really in tune with God's plan for us. In those moments we were excited and alive, and everything seemed new.

The moment might have come at some exciting event in your life: graduation, baptism, your first kiss, your first day on your first job, your wedding, the birth of a child, even catching your very first fish. It might have been something really spiritual, like a week at church camp or a church retreat. Or it might have been something of a smaller, quieter nature, like a very intimate conversation with your father or mother when you felt that they honestly understood what you were saying and why you felt the way you did.

We call these "mountaintop experiences," and oh how we hate to come down off that mountain! We want to hang on to that moment for as long as we can. We would prefer to stay in that moment of time and let the rest of the world go by for a while, but to freeze that one moment in time shuts off the possibility of the next moment.

In the Gospel reading for today we hear the writer of Luke give his version of the event which we call "The Transfiguration of Jesus." Matthew and Mark also contain an account of this strange occurrence, with some minor variations in the telling. It's one of those rare moments we were just talking about, one of those mountaintop experiences of life, which somehow defy adequate description and challenge us to stretch our concept of reality to the point that we usually wind up asking the question, "Did this really happen?" Events such as the Transfiguration somehow connect us with the mystery of creation and eternity.

For Jesus it was a time of confirmation and affirmation of his ministry. For Peter, James, and John it was a brief glimpse of his glory, a peek at the reality that lies just beyond everyday life.

But notice that Jesus quickly led the disciples back down off that mountaintop in spite of Peter's desire to pitch a tent and camp there for a while. Jesus led them back into the daily routine of teaching and preaching and caring for the broken and hurting people of the world they lived in, back to the reality of life in the valley.

Through the reading of the Bible, we too are witnesses to the transfiguration. We are able to see this rare moment in the life of Jesus where three of his disciples saw a glimpse of his glory. And then it was time to go back to reality; time to go back down the mountain.

There are moments in our lives where we see and experience the glory of God; unfortunately, we also are not able to stay in the moments of that glory. Even though we may want to stay and live in God's glory, it is Jesus who leads us back down the mountain because there is much to do.

I have to admit that it would be nice to stay in that moment where we experience God's grace and glory. We would not have to suffer as we do now. We would not experience pain or death or crying. I think all of us would prefer to live our entire lives in the glory of Christ Jesus as was recorded in today's gospel.

But Jesus didn't let James, John and Peter stay with him on the mountain so we must come down as well. It is interesting that immediately after descending the mountain with the disciples, Jesus was asked to continue his ministry with the healing of a boy who had a demon. Jesus knew that he could not stay up on the mountain top because there was work that still needed to be done.

As much as we would like to, we cannot stay in our own grace-filled moments with Jesus because there is work for us to do as well. It is because we are disciples of Christ Jesus that we are active in the world among all the suffering instead of hanging out in a grace moment.

We will have many grace moments throughout our lives and each one of them will transfigure us or change us for the better and each experience we have will prepare us for a future ministry. Live for those moments and live in those moments when you have them because God is shaping you for something special that is to come.