

6 Epiphany  
February 14, 2010  
Fr. Bill McGinty

## **“Soldiers of Christ! Again”**

Today’s readings are all about meeting God on a mountaintop. Moses encounters God on Mount Sinai, Paul retells Moses’ story in 2 Corinthians and Jesus with Peter, James and John under go the transfiguration on a mountain in Galilee.

On all three occasions the authors speak of the power God. It is a power so strong that faces have to be veiled against the reflective glory of God.

Paul wants the Christians in Corinth to remove the veil over their minds and face their God. The real spirit of God is Christ, and we should look to Christ as the transforming Spirit in our lives.

In the Gospel the Apostles have no clue what is happening on this occasion when Jesus takes them up on the mountain. Who Jesus is, his mission and destiny are all revealed in this one event.

Jesus is the total revelation of God flanked by the law and the prophets. This revelation of who Jesus is, is confirmed by his healing of the possessed boy at the end of the story.

The message is clear, there is a battle raging across the universe between the Goodness of God, and the forces of evil. Jesus deflects evil and teaches his disciples to do the same by tapping into the Goodness of God.

As we reflect on these readings perhaps we would well reflect on our concept and vision of God. If our faith tells us that one day we will come face to face with our God, none of us are ever too enthused by that prospect. When we ask ourselves, why that is, most of us, know in our hearts, that the prospect of facing God is too much for us. We feel to unworthy to be in the presence of so much goodness.

Why then do we feel that if we were to meet Jesus it would not be as bad? Is it because Jesus in human form is somehow mitigated by the fact that he lived like one of us, suffered and died? Is it that in being born of a woman Jesus grew up experiencing all the pain, struggle and humiliation that is the lot of all humanity? Or do we feel more comfortable with Jesus because he is our savior and redeemer?

My own feeling is that the transfiguration that the Gospel speaks of today is the same transforming experience that will come to each one of us as a result of being loved by God our Father and saved by our Savior Jesus Christ.

If Christ’s salvation makes us ‘Children of God’, then we will be transformed accordingly to reflect the Goodness of God our Father.

I have always thought that perhaps our after life and our heaven, should reflect the love, friendships, family and good works that surrounded us in this life. Throw in books, art, a little music and a fishing cabin in Colorado Rocky Mountains and I would settle for that.

The truth is that as Christians, we ask for so little in this life and little for the next. So many of you give so much of your time and effort in support of the mission of Christ and in response to the God who calls you to faith.

Jesus tells us that anything we ask in his name he will grant. “Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Perhaps, this is our greatest fault as Christians, that we do not ask enough, nor tap into that great reservoir of goodness and grace that Jesus has won for us through his death.

At confirmation we are taught that the Holy Spirit brings us the 7 gifts and 12 fruits of the Spirit. We learn them by heart: “Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord.”

Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Benignity, Goodness, Longiminity, Mildness, Faith, Modesty, Constancy and Chastity.

From time to time we all pray for wisdom; sometimes in stress or crisis for fortitude. All through college I prayed for knowledge. We all pray for peace. And once you have kids, for patience. I have even prayed for faith but I have never prayed for Mildness or Modesty, or goodness ..

Yet, we all know that we need the power of the Holy Spirit blowing through our lives. Our chances of succeeding in Christ’s mission through our own efforts are about as fanciful as a Democrat becoming fiscally responsible or a Republican voting against congressional earmarks.

We need grace in the form of the strength the Apostles received at Pentecost. We need to be transformed into “Soldiers of Christ.” Now there is a phrase you don’t hear too much today or anymore. “Soldier of Christ“. At confirmation 53 years ago we were told that “confirmation” made us “Soldiers of Christ.” Somehow, with the years, that phrase went out of fashion. It is not acceptable to be a Christian soldier anymore. Liberals tell us that it is politically incorrect; theologians tell us that it is a religious contradiction. Yet even as kids, I think we all knew it was a metaphor.

It was a metaphor that said; “Once I let the power of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in my life, I will be transformed and capable of fighting the evil that exists in this world, and the enemies of Christ.”

I see nothing wrong with that. Sometimes as Christians we make the mistake of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, we resist giving our children the protection of the shield of Christ’s Spirit, or letting them defend themselves with the sword of Christ’s word, but everything

from the dark side is okay, whether it be television, the Internet, monies or the influence of liberal education that debunks Christians morals, traditions and practices.

We are called to transformation. We are not called to Paris Peace talks in the war against evil, where evil gets to continue while we surrender our Christian weapons that protect us in the fight.

Let us not give evil a break, let us arm ourselves with the Holy Spirit. Let us be transformed so that Christ's mission may succeed and evil be vanquished. Let us be Soldiers of Christ again.  
Amen+