

“...his face changed in appearance and his clothes became dazzling white.”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a movie, based on a true story, called **MASK**. It was about a 16 year old boy by the name of Rocky. Cher, of Sonny & Cher (Bono), played the part of Rocky's mother. Rocky had a rare disease that caused his skull & face-bones to grow larger than normal.

As a result, Rocky's face is terribly misshaped and disfigured. His grotesque appearance causes some people to shy away from him and others to snicker and laugh at him.

Through it all, Rocky never pities himself. Nor does he give way to anger. He feels bad about his appearance, but he accepts it as a part of life.

Well, one day, Rocky & some friends visit an amusement park. They go into a 'House of Mirrors' and begin to laugh at how distorted their bodies and faces look in the mirrors.

Suddenly, Rocky sees something that startles him. One mirror distorts his face, in such a way, that it appears normal –even handsome!

*For the first time, Rocky's friends see him in a whole new way. They see from the **outside** what he actually is on the **inside**: a truly beautiful person.*

Something like this happened to Jesus and his friends in today's gospel, which I just read to you from St. Luke. During his 'Transfiguration,' Jesus' disciples saw him in a whole new way. They saw, for the first time, from the outside, what Jesus was on the inside: the glorious & beautiful Son of God!

Now this raises a question. Why was the 'Transfiguration' of Jesus placed among the Lenten readings, which are typically somber, instead of among the Easter readings, which typically deal with the glory of Jesus?

The answer to this question lies in the context in which we find the Transfiguration. It occurred right after Jesus told his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die.

When Peter objected to such a thing, Jesus screamed at him:

“Get behind me, you Satan! You are an obstacle to me.

You are not thinking as God does, but as human beings do.” Mt.16:22-23

You see, Peter, James, and John probably needed a 'spiritual shot in the arm' after that shocking experience and words of Jesus.

*And, I suspect, that's also why the Church places the Transfiguration in its Lenten readings. The Church wants to give **us** a 'spiritual shot in the arm' before it turns our attention to the terrible suffering of Jesus on Good Friday.*

*But, I now offer another reason why the Transfiguration is placed among the Lenten readings. I submit, for your consideration, the fact that it, the Transfiguration, bears a striking similarity to the Agony in the Garden. **Let me count the ways:***

--Like the Agony in the Garden, which took place on a mountain (the Mount of Olives), so too, the Transfiguration took place on a mountain –Mount Tabor.

--Like the Agony in the Garden, the Transfiguration was witnessed by the same three disciples, Peter, James, & John.

--And, like the Agony in the Garden, which took place at night, the Transfiguration also took place at night. AND, in both instances, the disciples fell asleep, while Jesus remained awake, praying.

*--Finally, and here's the **important** reason for the similarity of the two events (I was just having fun with those other reasons): the Agony and Transfiguration actually **complement** each other!*

You see, on Mount Tabor, the three disciples saw Jesus in a moment of ecstasy, when his **divinity** shown through in a way as never before.

On Mount Olives, the same three saw him in a moment of supreme agony, when his **humanity** shown through as never before.

Mount Tabor and Mount Olives reveal, in striking contrast, the humanity & the divinity of Jesus. The two mountain events are inseparable sides of the same coin ...**BECAUSE** they show us the **total** Jesus in a **total** way—his humanity **and** his divinity! (...the ‘Hypostatic Union.’)

And it is precisely here, my friends, that these two mountain-events contain an important **AND** practical message for us.

‘What exactly **is** that important **and** practical message for us?’ you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

Like Jesus, you and I have a two-fold dimension about us, too. There is, in each of us, something that is human and something that is divine. There is in each of us...a spark of Adam (a bit of dust) and a spark of God (a bit of stardust, if you would).

Allow me to explain: **Like Jesus on Mount Tabor**, we, too, experience moments of ecstasy, when the spark of God shines through us so brightly...it almost blinds us. We feel so close to God that we feel we can reach out and touch him. During such moments, we marvel at how beautiful the world is. We love everyone and everything. We hug our friends & forgive our, so called, enemies.

On the other hand, **like Jesus on the Mount of Olives**, we also experience moments of agony. During these moments, the spark of Adam surfaces so sharply that the spark of God flickers and almost dies. At such times, life is miserable. We feel that no one loves us or cares about us. We may even loath ourselves. We find fault with our dearest friends and we curse our enemies. We doubt that God even exists.

What to do—what to do: When these moments of agony and ecstasy come, we should recall those two mountains: **Tabor** and **Olives**. We should recall that Jesus also experienced these same highs and lows in life.

We should remember something even more important. We should remember that on both occasions...during his ecstasy on Mt. Tabor and during his agony on Mt. Olives...**Jesus prayed!**

If prayer was the way Jesus responded to these moments, then it should be the way we respond to them, too. If it was good enough for him ...then we should take the hint ...and follow!

And if we do, like Jesus on Mt. Tabor—we will hear our Father say to us:

“This is my chosen son.” “This is my chosen daughter.”

And, like Jesus during his agony on the Mount of Olives, we too will experience the touch of our Father’s healing hand ...and receive the strength to ‘go on’ ...and... do what we have to do.

I now close with this prayer:

God, our Father, let us know moments of ecstasy like the one Jesus knew on Mount Tabor. When these moments come, let us do what Jesus did. Let us turn to you in prayer and let us hear you say to us, “You are my chosen child.”

And, Father, in the same way, when moments of agony come to us, as they did to Jesus on the Mount of Olives, help us to do what Jesus did. Help us to turn to you in prayer. And let us feel the touch of your healing hand ...and the strength to ‘go on’ and to do what we must.

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you,
...the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.