

Be Still and Know That I Am God

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In the Eastern Churches the mystery of the Transfiguration was celebrated as an example of and a calling to prayer. Jesus took three of his disciples up the mountain to pray. Mountains are symbolically nearer to God and away from the ordinary distractions of life. While on the mountain, the disciples were given a revelation of the divinity of Christ. On the mountain Jesus spoke to Moses and Elijah about his exodus that would happen in Jerusalem. Exodus, or Passover, was the freeing of the Jewish people from the slavery of Egypt. Jesus Passover was his dying on the cross to liberate all humankind from the slavery of sin. In the following chapters of Luke's Gospel, Jesus will teach his disciples how, with the help of God's grace, humans may liberate themselves from sin and allow themselves to live as children of God.

God has revealed Himself to humans ever since the creation of the first humans. In the Epistle to the Romans St. Paul wrote, "Ever since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he made." This self-disclosure of God continued through the Old Testament in the Jewish people and in their prophets. The self-revelation of God reached its ultimate fulfillment in the Son of God coming in human flesh. We have come to understand that God acts within history, not apart from it in splendid isolation. The Lord takes human suffering seriously.

In Jesus of Nazareth God shows a human face with tenderness that is literally unimaginable. As on the mountain, the Lord shines on the world an infinite compassion. In a chaotic and violent world God arrives in the stillness of prayer. In Jesus God claims us as His own and promises a final triumph which the Gospel announces and faith proclaims. After Jesus' resurrection this has already been achieved and awaits only our acceptance.

God is the ground and basis of all reality, of all that is. God provides the world and everything and every one in it with a reference point, a goal and meaning. God acts within history and within the most intimate points of our lives and activities.

A book I have used as a source in this homily is "The Hidden Jesus" by Donald Spoto. The author quotes from Julian of Norwich: "In God we are enfolded, to Him we return." God takes what He has made for His own. He loves what he has made and saves it forever. That is the Gospel; that is "good news."

God makes Himself His gift to us, not just once but each day, each moment of always. We are forever befriended by our God. The mystery of God is something divine that knows and grasps you and me, that invites us into the life of God. The Letter to the Colossians says, "The mystery hidden from ages and from generations past has now been revealed" to those who make themselves accessible to God's whisper - those who heed God in silence. The moments when God acts in history on our behalf and the moments in which we reach out to Him seem to occur mostly in silence when we try to let thoughts become quiet and emotions calm.

Jesus took his disciples up the mountain where it was quiet. Deep interior silence is listening. Heedful attentiveness is the condition for prayer. It is becoming aware of the enveloping

Presence that makes health and life possible. This kind of silence is essential for discovering who we are, what we are thinking, and where we are going with our lives. It is also an absolute requirement if we are to call God to be God for us. In His presence we are all of us passive, all of us receivers. In His presence we experience our contingency, our total dependence; that too is part of the "good news." For all of our ideals and all of our goals, we cannot provide ultimate meaning for our lives. We can only recognize them. The source is elsewhere.

The creative life depends on silent intuition and reflection before anything can be put into words or action. Silence is not the absence of something. It is a most powerful influence and a precondition to live in reality. We enter into a creative silence that makes effective our relationship with God. The presence of Moses and Elijah provides a transition from the past to the present. They remind us of Hebrew history that prepared the world for Jesus of Nazareth. They give us background that helps us understand what God is doing today. Faith is always looking to what God is doing in the present. Through Jesus we come to experience God in the now. Jesus is present and active among us today. We need to take time in prayer to find where our God is leading us each day, and guiding us into a glorious future.