

August 2024

Lord, it is good for us to be here. (Mt 17:4)

Jesus and his disciples are making their way to Jerusalem. When he announces that it is the place where he will suffer, die and rise again, Peter rebels and expresses a general sense of dismay and incomprehension. The Master then takes him and James and John and he climbs 'a high mountain' from where he appears to the three bathed in a new and extraordinary light. Jesus' face 'shines like the sun' and Moses and the prophet Elijah converse with him. The voice of the Father is heard coming from a bright cloud and invites them to listen to Jesus, his beloved Son. When Peter witnesses this extraordinary event, he does not want to leave, and exclaims:

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Jesus invited his closest friends to have an unforgettable experience that they would always be able to remember.

Perhaps we too have felt wonder and emotion when we were aware of the presence and work of God in our lives. We may have had a sense of joy, peace and light and have wished that such moments would never end. We often have such experiences when we are with other people or thanks to what they do. Indeed, mutual love attracts God's presence because, as Jesus promised: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20). Sometimes, during these moments of intimacy with him, God makes us see ourselves and understand events as he does. It is as if we see through his eyes.

Such experiences are given to us so we will have the strength to make the effort and face the difficulties and challenges we encounter on our journey through life. They help us be sure that God has looked upon us and called us to be part of salvation history.

In fact, once the disciples have come down from the mountain, they will go together to Jerusalem where crowds of people full of hope await them but they will also meet with pitfalls, opposition, aversion and suffering. There 'they will be scattered and sent to the ends of the earth to be witnesses that our final dwelling is the Kingdom of God.'ⁱ

They will be able to start building God's house among men and women on earth because they have been 'at home' with Jesus on the mountain.

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At the end of this mysterious experience, Jesus speaks to the apostles with the words, 'Arise and do not be afraid' (Mt. 17:7). He addresses the same words to us. May we face whatever awaits us with the same courage as the disciples had.

This was what Chiara Lubich did. After a holiday period so full of light that it was described as 'the paradise of 1949' because of extraordinary contemplation of the mysteries of faith and deep awareness of God's presence in the small community with whom she was resting, she too did not want to return to everyday life. However, she did so with a new impetus because she realised that it was precisely because of that experience of enlightenment that she had to 'come down from the mountain' and set to work as an instrument of Jesus in the building of his Kingdom. This meant injecting his love and light into the very situations where it was lacking and even facing hardship and suffering.

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When it seems that darkness is falling around us, let us remember the times when the Lord has enlightened us. If we have already not experienced his nearness to us, let us seek it now. Let us make the effort to 'go up the mountain' to meet him in our neighbourhoods, to worship him in our churches, and also to contemplate him in the beauty of nature.

He is always there for us: it is enough that like Peter, James and John, we walk with him and humbly listen to him.ⁱⁱ

Edited by Silvano Malini and the Word of Life team

ⁱT. Radcliffe, OP, 2nd reflection for participants at General Assembly of Bishops' Synod, 1 Oct 2023.

ⁱⁱCf Mt 17:6.