

Homily - This is my son, the beloved - listen to him. Mark 9

Has anyone here had a mountaintop experience lately. Has anyone here had a mountain top experience at all. Maybe some people are wondering, what I am talking about. Let's try to get in touch with that concept a bit. What do we experience when we go to a mountaintop..... Yes, we see far out into the distance. We experience quiet. Hopefully, we experience peace. I'm sure some of us here have taken visitors up to the summit of Mount Cootha to take in the view and relax . It's a great refreshing experience. The mountain top experience I want to explore is the experience of rising above the ordinary and having a special experience – seeing things more clearly – seeing the bigger picture

I had a wonderful mountaintop experience two weekends ago when I participated in a Men alive weekend. It was held on a mountaintop overlooking Somerset dam. The view was spectacular and the tranquility of the bushland was very restful. But the best part of this experience was gathering with over a hundred Catholic men to reflect upon our faith and our relationships. Can any women here just imagine that – 100 Catholic men gathered on retreat – Yes it seems like a miracle !!! But it was fantastic – God is on the move through that movement . I didn't spot Moses or Elijah there , but I did see Fr Ray Chapman there – he's helping the Men alive team this year. I was really inspired by the talks given by team members. Wonderful stories of men, ordinary Catholic men and come back to his strong faith in God and a great love and appreciation for their families, through participating in one of these retreat programs. Clearly, for many, the experience of taking time out to be with God, to listen to him, and to share with others had been transformational. A number of men shared how they had cutback time in their working life to spend more time with their families and provide voluntary time for Christian ministry. The Spirit of Jesus was very much evidence during this weekend. I commend Men Alive to any men here, and I thank Robert Falzon and his team for making the effort to bring this ministry to the church.

Today's Gospel tells us of another mountaintop experience, where Jesus takes Peter, James and John, his close friends, up on a mountain, where they could be alone by themselves. Some say this mountain was Mount Tabor near Nazareth, others say it was Mount Herman, north of the Sea of Galilee. Either way I have stood on both of them and pondered what this scene in the Gospel was all about. Standing on either mountain you have this breathtaking clear view of Galilee. You can see the many villages, and ponder the lives of the people of this area who Jesus loved and had grown up with . There is a quietness and a stillness that is so relaxing after being amongst the noise and activity of village life. Clearly God wanted to give these 3 key followers of Jesus an extraordinary experience that would inspire them and sustain them through the difficult time they would have to face when Jesus was to be crucified on Calvary. They see Jesus dazzling white –glowing in glory. And God's message to them, and to us today, could not have been more simple. This is my son, my beloved, listen to him. *Listen to Him* . Peter, James and John accepted the message and went on to lead the church through the subsequent decades, despite the many challenges they faced.

The lectionary of the Church gives us this Transfiguration story every year in Lent , to invite us to take time out, to experience Jesus - to spend a little time with him. It's not that easy to listen to Jesus, when we are surrounded by the noise of television and radio, phone calls, and e-mails., let alone the many demands upon us by other people . Jesus himself, with the greatest love of all, and concerned to meet the needs of others, still knew that he had to take this time out, to

renew, refresh, recharge, and get in touch with his Father. If Jesus needed that, does anyone agree that we might need that too. Yes we need time out, to be with God .

Of course, we cant spend our lives, living on the mountaintop. Like Jesus in this story we need to come back down the mountain, and re-immers ourselves in the matters of life. If you go to the Gospel of Mark and continue reading after the transfiguration experience, you'll see that Jesus, on coming down the mountain, almost immediately was confronted by a large crowd and an argument being played out between his disciples and some scribes. The argument related to the inability of the disciples to drive out a demon from a young boy. Jesus drove the demon out. Of course, and when the disciples asked him why they weren't able to do it. He reminds them of their need for prayer. More prayer is required if you are going to make a difference in the world .

Actually, that reminds me of another brief mountaintop experience that a number of us shared on Friday. At St Peter Chanel Church, we hosted the annual International Women's Day of prayer. We followed a liturgy that had been developed by the people of Papua New Guinea. The mountaintop experience for us was the Joy Grace and blessing that we experienced in our worship through being united with our brothers and sisters from the other churches in the Gap. Seriously, there was a real anointing of the Spirit as we sung and prayed and held hands together – you could physically feel it . God delights in us coming together to pray. God wants to bless us when we pray, and of course any prayer is good. But if we limit our prayer to just brief moments in the car , on the run, or just at Mass on Sundays, we will not be experiencing the fullness of the spiritual life that Jesus would want for us.

Prayer should be a two way dialogue, not just us sending in requests. . If we really want to listen to Jesus, we need to hear what he says in the Scriptures. Sometimes I find I need to read a passage three times before it really sinks in, and I understand what Jesus is saying to me. Quite a few people in the parish at the moment are participating in the Lenten study program. That is really the best way to study the scriptures - to gather together to study .. Not just through the written word, but through the words and reflections of each other as we ponder the texts. If you haven't been able to find time to participate in the Lenten program, I would really encourage you to spend some time each week reading the Scriptures for the coming Sunday. It will allow your subconscious mind to break open the message that Jesus has for you. And he truly has a message for each of us, every day – if we would listen to him.

The long tradition of the Church, is that each year we need special time out to be with Jesus, to listen to him, to reflect upon our lives, and discern where he would be leaving us to next. I would like to throw out a challenge to everyone here to consider doing a retreat program sometime each year. It could be a weekend program, like Man alive, or Cursillo, or it could be a midweek program. They're a numerous opportunities advertised in the Catholic Leader. If you want to grow, you need to go to the mountaintop to take time out to be with Jesus and listen to him.

Lets just have a few moments of quiet now to listen to Jesus , and ask yourself what message is he giving you right now . In a few words ponder what is he saying to you .