

# Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

## MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

# CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN



### SUNDAY READINGS:

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalms: 33: 4-5, 18-20, 22

Timothy 1: 8b-10

Matthew 17: 1-9

### COMMENTARY

The Transfiguration of the Lord has become a very important force in my life since August 6<sup>th</sup> of 1975 and then again in 1978. These are the days when I made my first and perpetual vows as a Franciscan Sister of the Sacred Heart. In preparation for those days I “climbed the mountain” of a profound preparation led by many holy and dedicated people, some were sisters and priests. Others were laity who I had the privilege to minister with before my vow celebrations. However, I did not have the desire to construct a tent because by 1978, I knew that I was headed for Brazil, not to construct a tent, but to hook up a hammock in the midst of the people.

Perhaps this gospel has touched your life, too, and has been a source of inspiration in your life. Our life needs mountain experiences where we can move away from the usual events and encounters to a profound one with our God that sustains our life journey. The climb up the mountain can be our first challenge. Is it a clear path easy to advance further? Is it one filled with stones and rocks which can trip us up if we don't keep our eyes on the road? Is it covered with boulders that prevent us from seeing no more than five feet ahead?

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Like Peter, James and John, our eyes must be fixed on Jesus. In each of the scenarios that I created above, the challenge to see Jesus is very different. At times we feel like he is right at our side and we can take his hand. Maybe we do see him ahead but his pace is different than ours so we cry out, "Hey, Jesus, wait for me!" And the hardest climb is not seeing him because of the huge boulders. I am praying with a dear friend of mine as she discerns trying to make the right decision. She knows that Jesus is there, but right now he is out of sight.

Grace is what all the readings have in common this Sunday. God always is reaching out to us in all circumstances. God promises life to us and the capacity to be reborn. God understands the hardships and difficulties that we must face, but being a God who loves justice and righteousness, God is always near. Why, then, does it feel that God is not listening? This season of Lent offers some answers that can be a struggle to understand.

To open myself to receive God's grace is the key. God offers divine grace all the time, but changes need to be made in all of us, so as to receive the grace that supports us. We need to turn to our God in true humility and recognize what has blinded me from seeing Jesus. Through prayer, fasting and serving those in need, my eyes will be open and we will see Jesus even beyond the highest boulder! Thank you, God, for being present to us and may your grace and Word during this Lenten season, help us to climb every mountain.

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## NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

**First Reading - Genesis 12:1-4a:** Even though this is a very short reading, each word is powerful because of the message that God gives to Abram to go forth to an unknown land. If he obeys the Lord, he will be blessed. Abram does go because his faith was so great. What a challenge for us in today's world.

**Responsorial Psalm - Psalm: 33: 4-5, 18-20, 22:** Today's psalm compliments so beautifully the first reading by giving the reasons why we have faith in God's word. The word of God is true and can always be trusted, even though we may not always understand the consequences of the word. Justice and right are the characteristics of the word which strengthens our faith.

**Second Reading - Timothy 1: 8b-10:** Once again a short but powerful reading is this one from St. Paul to Timothy. We are today the "Timothys" that have embraced the Gospel message to spread the Good News. Let us remember that God's grace will sustain us and guide us because Jesus is our savior and our brother.

**Gospel - Matthew 17: 1-9:** The gospel relates the story of the Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor. In the Bible the mountain is the place to encounter God. Undoubtedly as the three apostles climbed the mountain with Jesus, their minds and hearts were on alert to see what would be happening. They were not disappointed! The appearance of Elijah and Moses and the transfigured face of Jesus caused them to "fall prostrate and to be very much afraid." This experience marked them and strengthened them for the rest of their lives.

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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