

“I Go to the Hills...”

In case you missed the newsflash, it is the 60th anniversary of the movie, “The Sound of Music.” It is the first movie that I believe I saw in the theatre as my parents took the four oldest to a matinee and then to dinner at the Lenox House. I only remember this because at 4 years old I got a little lost and thought someone else was my mother (from the back.)

Let’s go back to the movie. The opening of the film is the title song. Maria sings of the hills as a place that holds music, a place to go when her heart feels lonely, to laugh like a brook, and all kinds of metaphoric language. Who can forget that opening, panoramic scene as she twirls without a worry or care in the world. Now, mind you, she had wandered off from a cloistered convent to which she had to return. The bells of the Abbey brought her back to reality and she knew she must return to the work at hand or to whatever they had meant at that point.

The idea of going to the hills to seek solace or solitude is ancient; “with songs they have sung for a thousand years.” Even the psalmist, in Psalm 121, references “I lift up my eyes to the hills from whence has

come my help.” Some say it is the psalm that the Hebrew people sang or recited as they approached the hills of Jerusalem. Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to communicate with God, as we heard in the first reading today. Jesus also would take the chosen 12 to the hills when he wanted to teach them or pray with them.

On this particular day, Jesus took only Peter, James, and John with him. We hear more about those three than anyone of apostle, with the exception of Judas in the passion narratives. We encountered James and John, the “sons of thunder” or Zebedee, in previous readings as they asked for seats of honor with Jesus in the “kingdom.” Apparently, Jesus had some great plans for these three if he brought them with him for this momentous event. And what an event it was!

It is here that these three, as well as us, see the Son of God as the Creator sees him. It is here that the Jesus is not just transformed, but transfigured into something or someone that even the Apostles could not have fathomed. In an event that resembled today’s lesson from Exodus, Jesus shone! However, he did NOT hide himself from the Apostles and they were able to serve as witnesses. In Mark’s gospel, Jesus tells them

not to speak of this to anyone but in Luke's version, it says that they didn't speak of this at that time. Apparently, they did tell about what they witnessed as it is included in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke.)

If you had been there, you may have wanted to stay on top of that hill or mountain to bask in the glory of Jesus. You may have come to the conclusion that you have officially "seen it all" and don't need to come back down. But, as believers, we are always beckoned to come back down from the mountain, or to leave the confines of a sacred place and go out and spread the Good News in whatever way we can. I would venture to guess that Peter, James, and John wanted to stay put. What would they do with this new information that they had? Wouldn't it be easier to stay where they were?

Well, yes, it could have been easier, but life isn't always about what is easy. As people who practice Christianity, we are called to not only live our own lives in order to follow the Gospel message, but we are called to live that out for others as we give witness to what we are taught. It all well and good for us to come and take some time on a

retreat, be it in the mountains, lake, ocean, forest, or wherever we find comfort. We, as Christians, are always called back to the world in which we live.

My prayer is that we can all take some time on the mountain, wherever that may be for you. It may have to be makeshift if you cannot get to your usually spot. Go to the hills, go to God when your heart is lonely. See if you can be transfigured with Christ. If you're feeling good, still take some time for yourselves so that you can minister to a friend who may not be feeling it this week.

Lately, many people are anxious, upset, confused, and angry while some others don't see what all the fuss is. The reality is this: we are called to bring the Good News to the poor. This means not only the ones who are financially in need, but to those are spiritually, emotionally, and physically poor. We talked about that last week. We are called to be people of the Transfiguration, those who can bring the message of Jesus Christ who preached the unconditional love of God for those who seek it and even for those who don't—it is there for the taking. Let me say this as your pastor, minister, and teacher: if you need me, reach out to me,

please. It may be a busy week, but you come before any play or production.

Our churches are called to Transfigure with Christ, to be places where the Gospel message can be upheld. Let's work to bring that with us wherever we go. Amen.