

## **Seeking: Honest questions for deeper faith**

### **Week 2: How do you begin again?**

Welcome everyone to week 2 of our message series for Lent that we are calling “Seeking: Honest questions for deeper faith. “

This Lent, our readings offer us many stories of those who are seeking: Adam and Eve in the Garden after an encounter with a snake, Peter and the disciples on Mt. Tabor, the Israelites thirsty in the desert, a Samaritan woman at the well, a man born blind really seeing for the first time, Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus. In each of these stories, someone is seeking a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. Each story unfolds with questions asked and faith explored. Often, an unveiling occurs where assumptions are disrupted, and a new perspective is revealed.

If you are new to Church or returning to Church this Lent, you are probably returning with more questions and a critical lens. We hope this series will help all of us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful.

This Lent, I invite everyone here today to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking.

I encourage you to stay curious, open, and nimble. I hope you will soften your assumptions and expand your perspectives. Throughout this season, we hope you will continually ask yourself: what am I seeking? What is God seeking?

In the Catholic Church, faith has two connotations: the deposit of faith that is handed down by the Church and the faith that we each personally embrace. The deposit of faith is unchanging but how we personally live the faith is a journey. Part of this journey is about seeking God in the world, seeking the good, seeking a deeper truth. We seek through prayer...through scripture. In our seeking, we pull together memories, feelings, questions, and experiences, all in an effort to see God more clearly.

In order to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking, we must maintain a posture of listening, staying open and curious instead of calloused and closed off.

For this six week Lenten message series, each week our seeking will be guided by a question. These questions won't necessarily lead to answers, but they can help us find clarity and a new perspective. I pray that these questions will create a safe space for you to be raw and

honest with your doubts, your fears, your confusion. Ultimately, I pray that this journey of seeking leads each and every one of you to a new beginning, a restoration, a wider grace.

Last week, we looked at the question, who will you listen to? From the onslaught of messaging we receive, we must choose carefully who we will listen to. Last week, we invited you to consider what voices might be pulling you toward what is life-giving rather than death-dealing.

If we are to be like Jesus, we ~~also~~ must begin by first listening to the voice of God at our center. This voice tells us, above all and after all, we are His Beloved.

In the Gospel today, we hear the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus. The disciples had seen Jesus perform many miracles. He healed a man that could not walk. He made a dead girl come back to life. He fed thousands of people from just a few fish and loaves of bread. However, the Transfiguration of Jesus reveals His identity in a unique way to the disciples who join Him.

The Gospel begins with Jesus taking Peter James and John up the mountain. Very often in the Bible, God talks to His people on mountain tops. This story takes place on Mt. Tabor. I visited Mt. Tabor about 10 years ago and

let me tell you...this is a very high mountain. It made me wonder “how did the disciples get up there? And how long were they gone?” It must have taken them a day or more to get up there.

When I was in Israel, to get to the top of Mt. Tabor, we had to use two vehicles. A larger bus and then a smaller van because the roads became smaller and narrower. When we finally made it to the top, we visited the site where the Transfiguration actually happened. But what was so fascinating was that when we were walking outside, we experienced a cloud coming down over us. You couldn't help but recall the story of the Transfiguration in the thickness of this cloud.

Unfortunately, we...unlike the disciples, did not hear the voice of God and eventually had to get back on the bus.

Back to our story...Jesus and the disciples are at the top of Mt. Tabor.

Then Jesus, ***“was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him.”***

***Then Peter says "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."***

Let's sit in this moment like Peter wanted to. Peter thinks that he is making a great suggestion about building tents for all of them. This is something we might all want to do. Building tents would give comfort and extend hospitality to Moses and Elijah. Peter's trying not only to make the situation familiar and but also make it last. He's just feeling good about the whole experience. However, when we are out of our comfort zone, we say things that don't necessarily make sense.

This is what happens to Peter. Instantly, he is cut off. While Peter was still speaking, he was silenced through God's voice. God says, ***"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."***

While the identity of Jesus as the Son was proclaimed at His Baptism, now the command to "listen to him" is added.

To understand Jesus, the disciples must listen and listen and listen to what Jesus says about suffering and death and resurrection.

The voice of God terrified the disciples: ***“When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid.”***

Jesus comforted them and said ***“Rise and do not be afraid.”*** Trust in Me.

The Gospel ends with the disciples and Jesus coming down the mountain. Now the real work of their transformation begins. The real work now is how will they integrate the knowledge that Jesus is divine.

Let's take a moment to reflect on this Gospel passage in the light of your own life. Believe it or not God is at work in you and your life. Everyone has had a God experience because that is how we are created. He is calling each and every one of us to Himself. Christians, Jews, Muslims, pagans, atheists, agnostics, people who are not religious but spiritual...

However, it isn't about the mountain top experience or the Transfiguration part that is transforming...

The Transfiguration shows that Jesus has the power to transform us...but the reality is that it is in listening to **Jesus** that we are transformed. As God commanded, “Listen to Him.”

How can we be transformed?

Our trust is required, our choice is required for growth.

Maybe you don't trust right now but that is okay.

Just make the choice to listen to Him and trust will come as you see Him at work in your life.

And He will work in your life.

This week, we look at the question, "How do you begin again?" How do **we** begin again?

We need to listen to Him, listen to Jesus.

We do not often hear the voice of God as explicitly as the disciples do in the Gospel today.

For most of us, God tends to speak in whispers and hints.

This does not mean that God is any less present, but it does make God's presence less obvious.

For us it is a matter of actively seeking Him so that we can hear God's voice and remain assured of God's loving presence as we piece together our paths in life.

So for this week, during this Lenten journey, I want to give you some homework.

And don't worry it's not hard.

Pray about, think about this...how you would answer this question: Who is Jesus to you? Do you trust that answer? Do you really believe that God can transform you?

For all disciples in every age, Jesus is the one whom we must trust to grasp us, raise us up from our fears and lead us into the new.

Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, justice, balance.

We are seeking our calling, - the sacred and how to live as a disciple.

So today, I ask you...How do you begin again?  
The answer is...**listen to Him.**