

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week I wrote that we can trust God: we are His children; He is our *Abba*, our Daddy. What a blessing when we truly come to realize this fact! I have spent over twenty years pondering in a deep way this reality of God's divine, intimate Fatherhood for me, and I am constantly awed and amazed in new ways!

Today's Gospel of the Transfiguration also speaks about trust in God, but from a different angle. Jesus is transfigured and Moses and Elijah appear and speak with Him (Luke tells us that they were discussing His "exodus," meaning His crucifixion, Luke 9:31). One important point of this is that we see how God the Father gives Jesus the Son the *strength* and *courage* to step forward toward His death. But I want to focus on the Apostles. Peter, James and John went up the mountain as well. Why did Jesus Transfigure before *them*? Jesus spent plenty of time in prayer alone, off in deserted places. If the Transfiguration was just for Him, why would these three be with Him? I think it was so that Peter, James and John would be prepared for the trials to come. After seeing Jesus Transfigured, and hearing the voice of the Father from the heavens "**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him**" (Matthew 17:5), there could be no doubt that Jesus was the Messiah, that He was the Son of God. So when the scandal of the Cross happened, these three, at least, would know that they were not mistaken about Jesus, even if they were utterly perplexed by the events of His death. The Transfiguration was so that the Disciples could be strengthened in their faith.

Do you see this? God knows all of the trials we have had, we have now, AND WILL HAVE in our lives. He is completely aware of how our lives play out. Sometimes we rail at God, questioning whether He knows or cares about our trials, our suffering, our struggles. The answer is a resounding "YES! HE DOES!" When we come to Him, when we follow Him, He will give us *strength* to get through the trials. He IS the giver of courage for our suffering. When life brings us to our knees, we have a choice to get angry at God and turn our back on Him, or to turn *to* Him and receive all of the love and help from Him that we need to get through our problems. Which will we choose?

Do we trust God?

You see, God's "Plan A" was not to have the world in the mess it is in right now. We heard about the Fall last week in the first reading. WE made this mess. But God has a plan for where we are at right now, how to get us to His Heart. It's like when we get lost going someplace. Maybe we shut off our GPS for a while thinking we could do it on our own. Once we realize how helpless we are in finding our way, in an act of humility, we turn the GPS back on. What does it say? "**Recalculating.**" God has an infinite number of ways of recalculating our way back to Him, but we have to turn on the "**God Positioning System**" and listen to His directions. That's what the voice of the Father said on the mountain: "**listen to him**" (Matthew 17:5).

Sometimes we can be afraid of what Jesus will say to us, though. What is He going to require of us. What is he going to ask – no *demand* – that we give up to follow Him?! St. John Paul II reassured us, and Pope Benedict XVI repeated,

"If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? And once again the Pope [John Paul II] said: No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. ... Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life. Amen." (Inauguration Mass of Pope Benedict XVI w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato.html)

The very first words Jesus speaks after the Father speaks are, "**Rise, and do not be afraid**" (Matthew 17:7). He calls us to trust Him. He does not want us to run from Him, but into His arms! May we truly come to trust God and His love!