Blog
Spirituality



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I remember it clearly. It was a day like any other, nothing special had happened. My day at school had gone like it usually did: Kids had been kids, my principal had asked for data, and I had lesson plans and an in-service lined up for that weekend. It was a Thursday afternoon. I left my classroom and walked through an empty parking lot to my car. I sat behind the wheel and as I was getting ready to leave, I suddenly began to weep. It was a few days before the world would be turned upside down with the news of a COVID-19 pandemic that would later prove to be devastating.

I have thought that maybe that evening in my car was a prophetic warning of the years of lockdown and social distancing that would follow, but I realize it was quite the contrary. It was more of a revelation — God's way of bringing me to the light after a long time of having been in darkness. Jessica Powers said in one of her poems: *I have climbed out of a narrow darkness / on to a ledge of light. / I am of God; I was not made for night.* This is exactly how I felt. Even if God needs time and darkness to nurture anything in me, I very much prefer the light. I was not made for the night.

I admire people who are able to find themselves in the dark night of the soul. I am not one of them. A very wise sister told me the reason I felt uncomfortable in darkness was that I always found God in the light. Yet, it seems like God likes to hide in the darkness too. There are very few times in the Scriptures when God reveals God's Self in plain daylight.

One of those times was the Transfiguration. I wonder what the disciples experienced on the mountaintop. Were they blinded by the sudden light they experienced? The Gospel describes Jesus during the transfiguration as having a face that shone like the sun and clothes that were as white as light. The disciples were probably not over what they were witnessing when a bright cloud then came that cast a shadow over them, from which they heard a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

The Gospel says that the disciples were afraid. I think if I had been there, I would have been terrified, along with a host of other emotions. However, regardless of what Peter may have been feeling, he was ready to build tents for Jesus, for Elijah, and for Moses. Now, this is something I completely understand: Peter seems to try to rise above whatever he is feeling in order to control the environment (something he can do, since he has no control of anything else happening in this story).

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What did the transfiguration of Jesus show them? Were they afraid of the voice they heard? Were they afraid of not having any control over the situation? They were able to behold the bright face of Jesus, unlike Moses, who asked to behold God's face and was only granted a partial glimpse. What did this radiance reveal?

It is possible the disciples were able to see themselves for the first time the way God saw them, as created in the image and likeness of God. I would bet the blinding light pierced the darkest places within them, moving them from darkness into light. This event on the mountaintop allowed them to not only witness the transfiguration of Jesus but also the transfiguration of their lives and their discipleship.

This was precisely my experience that Thursday evening in the car. When I looked in the mirror and saw my reflection, instead of seeing an overwhelmed young woman who was struggling, I saw a glimpse of God in me. I thought, "This must be the way God sees me." Even if, at the time, I was in a place that was uncomfortable and unfamiliar, I knew it was a temporary place, not a final destination. What I saw revealed to me that this was a place I couldn't call home.

Darkness had been a place of uncertainty, an in-between place, a place of disconnect from myself and others, a place where I had to face my own fears and inadequacies. As I saw myself in the mirror, I didn't instantly become a luminous being. I wasn't transfigured with a face radiant like the sun. The transfiguration I experienced was the realization that, despite my shortcomings and inadequacies, I am beloved. God is pleased with me, and has always been so. I reconciled with the darkness and stopped fighting it.

The Gospel of John says that *what came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* How can we find God in the darkness? How do we find and cling to that ledge of light? I truly believe that, in order for God to pierce through our darkness, we must be willing to embrace the darkness and open our hearts to those parts of ourselves that we do not like. Our darkness is only one part of who we are, not the whole. We must be willing to see ourselves the way God sees us. We must be willing to embrace our identity as beloved.

May we all experience God's light piercing our darkness. May we all know we are of God, not made for night. And may we make our lights shine so brightly that we will

help others climb out of their darkness and cling together to God's ledge of light.