

**Reflection on the Gospel-Second Sunday of Lent Year B**  
**(Mark 9:1-9)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The wilderness was the geographical and symbolic setting for last week's gospel. This week, the setting is a mountain. Wilderness and mountain remind us that God's Earth is the locus of mystery and grace, the place of Earth-divine encounter. The mountain, like the wilderness, links Mark's story of Jesus with the story of the Israelites. Moses' encounter with God on the mountain of Sinai was a defining moment in the life of the people: the Israelites entered into covenant with God at this mountain and received the Law that was to guide their lives as a people. Some centuries later, at a time of crisis in Israel's life, the prophet Elijah returned to this mountain and experienced the presence of God in the gentle breeze.

In the gospel passage for today, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up the mountain and is "transfigured" in their presence. Elijah and Moses, the key prophetic figures of Israel, appear and enter into dialogue with Jesus, God's definitive prophet. The "transfiguration" seems to point to a time in Jesus' ministry when he accepts his likely fate: if he continues to challenge oppression and injustice, he is certain to encounter opposition, even death. He struggles with that realisation in the wilderness and comes to terms with what it involves on the mountain.

The voice of God reaffirms the identity of Jesus that was announced in the very first verse of the gospel and proclaimed at his baptism in the Jordan. It calls for a response from the disciples who have ascended the mountain in his company: "Listen to him". In the two scenes immediately before this one, Jesus has spoken of the suffering that he and his followers will have to face. These words are crucial to an understanding, not only of Jesus, but of discipleship. They seem to fall on deaf ears.

Peter wants to hold on to the experience of glory, to "make tents" and settle down. He prefers not to face the difficulties involved in fidelity to the mission. But that is not the way of discipleship. Like Jesus and his companions, we too need the occasional glimpse of final victory. We also need the courage and the good sense to follow through on the path that brings life, despite the pain. We can feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges facing us and by the opposition we sometimes experience. If we are to maintain the struggle for an ecologically sustainable, safe, and peace-filled world, we have to "listen" to the invitation of Jesus and come to terms with the personal costs involved in a gospel way of life.