

# Jesus is Here to Transform Our Lives

---

**A Sermon by Fr. Orlando J. Addison  
Holy Faith, Port St. Lucie, FL  
Sunday, February 10, 2013**

Today is our last Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epiphany is the season in which we celebrate the manifestation of Christ to the world. He came to us as a child, born in a manger; shepherds came to His birthplace to pay him homage, and three kings, led by a star, visited Him, and brought Him significant and symbolic gifts - gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

This is the season in which we are reminded that God's Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

We are reminded that He was willing to come into the world to save us, to lead us from eternal death to eternal life, and to offer His life as a sacrifice for our sins.

Epiphany is the season that marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry with his Baptism in the River Jordan, the time when Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit, and validated by the Father. It is the season that tells us about Christ's first miracle at a wedding in Cana, and the recruitment of his twelve disciples. It shows us the bright side of Jesus' life.

But the bright side in the events of Jesus' life comes to an end today, at least for a little while,

because this Wednesday we will begin a new season - one that is covered with a dark thick

cloud, and one that will present to us the cruelty of the cross. I am talking about the season of

Lent, the 40 day walk toward His crucifixion, and His glorious resurrection three days after.

Lent is the season in which we are asked to gently put on the breaks. It should be a time to slow down our pace so that we can become more aware of our relationship with Christ. In today's Gospel we hear the Father telling the Apostles, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him!" We shouldn't take these words lightly. In fact our life as Christians depends upon them. Our own personal transformation can come through listening closely to Jesus.

*Illustration:*

Fed up with people telling him he was going deaf;

A man went to get his hearing tested,

After examining the man;

The audiologist place a clock on a desk and asked the man if he could hear it ticking;

The man replied; “Yes I can”.

The audiologist then placed the clock at the far end of the room;

And again asked the man if he could hear it ticking;

Once again the man replied; “Yes I can”.

The audiologist then opened the door and walked out of the office;

Placing the clock in a corridor and asked the man if he could hear it ticking;

For a third time the man replied; “Yes I can”.

The audiologist then told the man;

“There is nothing wrong with your hearing, you just don’t listen to people!”

There is of course a big difference between hearing and listening!

Most of us were born hearing well, but listening is something you have to work on!

Listening to Jesus means taking the time to pray in silence, it means taking a passage from the Bible, slowly digesting it, and allowing it to enter your heart. It means to discover what Jesus would like us to do in His kingdom, and to discern God’s Good News for us and the world.

Listening to Jesus means finding a quiet place where you can isolate yourself from the world temporarily so that you can be totally present in body, mind and spirit, to Jesus -- A place where you can rest; where you can be filled with God’s Holy Spirit; and where you can regain your spiritual strength to continue His work and ministry.

Jesus took the time to pray. He took the time to listen to His Father, to retreat from a busy world to rest and regain his strength. Today’s Gospel from Luke tells us that “Jesus took with Him

Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray.” Jesus prayed in this solitary place because it was a time in His life's journey that required Him to spend quality time with His Heavenly Father. He went up the mountain because it was easier for him to concentrate and listen in a quiet, pleasant environment. For us, Prayer and listening to Jesus, is the indispensable means which prevents the light of Christ within us from growing dull or dying. If we are going to let the brightness of Christ's light shine in, and through, our lives then we, like Jesus, need to pray and listen. Praying and listening or listening prayer involves, on our part, daily discipline and concentrated effort.

When we pray, we need then to realize that prayer is as much listening to God as it is speaking with God.

When we engage in listening prayer, we too, like Jesus and his disciples, are given a mountaintop experience, a vision from God. A mountain top prayer experience enables us to see things which we could never see in the valley or plain. Without vision, we become stagnant, myopic and careless. We lose sight of the purpose and mission, which our Lord has called us to strive toward.

Has Jesus revealed his vision to you through prayer? Do you know what God requires of you in His Kingdom, in His church? Has He shared his vision for Holy Faith with you? Has He told you what kind of Church he would like Holy Faith to become? Is God pleased with our worship, our giving, and with the time we spend in His church? The only way we will know the answers to these questions is to take the time to listen to Christ when we pray.

Worship is another way of praying to God. During worship we come into contact with Christ and we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. In worship we pray, we listen to God's Word, we sing hymns of praise and we listen to the interpretation of Scripture through the sermon. In worship we receive Christ in the Sacrament; He comes to us in the Bread and Wine and dwells with us in Spirit. Worship is our mountaintop experience where we are transformed in body, mind and spirit. But how often do we miss the presence of God here during our worship services? How often are our thoughts pulled away from God on Sunday mornings? Do we really come to church focused on God, or focused on ourselves or other things?

The Rev. Spencer Homan, an Anglican priest, shared the following story with his congregation and I would like to share it with you this morning. He shared the example of two men attending the same church, at the same service, at the exact same time. The first man heard the organist miss a note during the prelude, and he cringed. He saw a teenager talking when everybody was supposed to be bowed in silent prayer. He felt like the usher was watching to see what he put in the offering plate and it made him boil. He caught the preacher making a slip of the tongue five times in the sermon by actual count. As he slipped out through the side door during the closing hymn he muttered to himself, “Never again, what a bunch of clods and hypocrites!”

The second man heard the organist play an arrangement of “A Mighty Fortress” and was thrilled at the majesty of it. He heard a young girl take a moment in the service to speak her simple moving message of the difference her faith makes in her life. He was glad to see that this church was sharing in a special offering for the hungry children of Haiti. He especially appreciated the

sermon that Sunday - it answered a question that had bothered him for a long time. He thought as he walked out the doors of the church, "how can a man come here and not feel the presence of God?" Both men went to the same church, on the same Sunday morning... and each found what he was looking for.

Do we sometimes miss the fact that God is present with us here on Sunday mornings? Do we go through the motions, do our duty, sign that we were in attendance, then go on our way, never seeing that God was with ... that God Is with us, even now.

As we gather as brothers and sisters, He is with us. As we sing the songs of praise, He is with us.

Even as I give the sermon, He is with us. Whether or not you have seen or felt God's presence today, He is here. And since God is with us this morning, you have come face to face with God as you meet with Him in worship and praise. Now what are you going to do? Are you going to hide your face like Moses, or react like the disciples did, not knowing what to do?

If you have not felt the presence of God today, I encourage you to pray... to open your heart and let Him into your life. If you have not felt the presence of God today, maybe it is because you are resisting the Holy Spirit by seeking your own personal satisfaction and not allowing Christ to lead you in the worship. Jesus is here, He wants to walk with you, He wants to change your life, He wants your face to shine with His glory.

On the other hand, if you have felt God's presence today, you have been renewed, strengthened and transformed to reflect His glory in your life as you go into the world to do His will.

**Click [here](#) for today's Collect and Lessons**