

# The Unique Gentleness of Jesus

By Fr. Glenn McDonald, CSB

The month of March begins with a Gospel reading of great beauty and mystery: the Transfiguration. For those unfamiliar with this powerful moment in Jesus' life, it occurs when he takes his closest disciples — Peter, James and John — and leads them up a high mountain. Suddenly, Jesus is transfigured before them; his face shines like the sun, and his clothes become as white as light.

Yet, there is still more to come: a celestial community appears. Moses, the giver of God's law, and Elijah, the holy prophet, appear at Jesus' side and converse with him. Captivated, the three disciples respond to this supernatural scene with ease, wishing it would never end.

The peacefulness of the moment is interrupted by a voice like a thunderclap that frightens the disciples: "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" The powerful voice of Jesus' heavenly Father causes the three disciples to lose their footing and fall to the ground in fear, bracing for what might happen next.

Their fear is suddenly healed when Jesus touches them and says, "Get up and do not be afraid." The moment is over; Moses, Elijah, and the overpowering voice from heaven are gone. Only the three disciples and Jesus remain.

For a long time, I enjoyed reading the Transfiguration scene for its might and clarity. The disciples were left with no doubt that Jesus is the Son of God, and I often longed for a similarly powerful moment to strengthen my own questioning faith. No matter how hard I pray, however, no such terrifying moment has come. Instead, what I have received are moments of gentleness.

When Jesus shines like the sun, the disciples are unafraid. When he speaks to Moses and Elijah, they calmly observe. And, when the voice from heaven overwhelms the disciples, Jesus restores their peace. A unique quality of Jesus is his gentleness. In his very self, he makes the awesome, fall-to-the-ground power of God present in a way that does not overwhelm us. I struggle with this; I keep looking for his power and might, but he chooses to reveal himself each day, gently.