

The Holy Mountain of Jesus and Saint Patrick

Today, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a holy mountain and they see Jesus in a way they had never seen before: He is transfigured. He becomes radiantly beautiful and they are in rapture.

Peter says, "It is good to be here!"

But soon, on another mountain, he will say:

"It is not good to be HERE, and he will run away for his life from Mount Calvary.

We too see Mount Calvary like ugliness every day on the evening news. There is too much ugliness all around. It can sap our spirits and dim our vision.

So we too need to see differently. There is an old song: "I Can See Clearly Now!"

That is the message of today's Gospel:

See Jesus clearly for who He really is: Our Beautiful Saviour.

SAINT PATRICK'S MOUNTAIN

There is another mountain of transfiguration in County Mayo in Ireland.

In the Lent of 441 A.D. Saint Patrick climbed that mountain
and made his Lent there until he came down to light the Easter Fire at Tara.

An old hymn celebrates his coming to Ireland's mountains:

"All hail to Saint Patrick

who brought to our mountains,

the gift of God's faith,

the sweet smile of God's love."

"The sweet smile of his love!" How beautiful!
That is what Peter, James, and John experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration.
It is what we need to experience too.

On the last Sunday of July, in 1973, my friend Larry and I
had a transfiguration experience on Crough Patrick, Patrick's Mountain.



The rock pictured here is from that mountain.
St. Patrick walked by it as did the Druids for 4000 years before.

Indeed this little rock is shaped like the mountain itself!

Our midnight trek up the mountain started as a whim in a pub in nearby Westport.
My friend, Fr. Larry Dorsey, led the way and I followed reluctantly.

All the way up, I moaned and complained, and only endured so that I would not be accused of being a wimp when we returned.

At 2:00 am, I arrived at the top in the midst of 50,000 other pilgrims.

I felt no surge of joy, only fatigue.

St. Thomas Aquinas once wrote, "Everything is received according to the mode [mood] of the recipient.
If our mood is dour, pessimistic, self pitying, that is the way we see things.

It was the way I saw things on that mountain,
UNTIL the first streaks of dawn shone over the white capped sea,
and fingers of amber light peaked around the crags of the mountain.

And that first dawning light illumined the faces of the pilgrims,
much as the light must have done on Christ's face on Mount Tabor.

And then I could say, and even sing:

"I can see clearly now!"

I had been given the gift of a Transfiguration on the Holy Mountain.
And that moment changed my life and set me on a course of writing.

You need not climb a mountain today.
At the Eucharistic celebration, look around at the faith filled faces around you and glimpse their beauty.

And in that beauty, see "the smile of God's love."

Breakfast Question: How do I see things?

Personal Reflection: What do I admire about Saint Patrick?

* On the Eve of St. Patrick many years later, the angels came and took Father Larry home.
Thanks Larry, for leading me up the mountain. Rest now from your climb.